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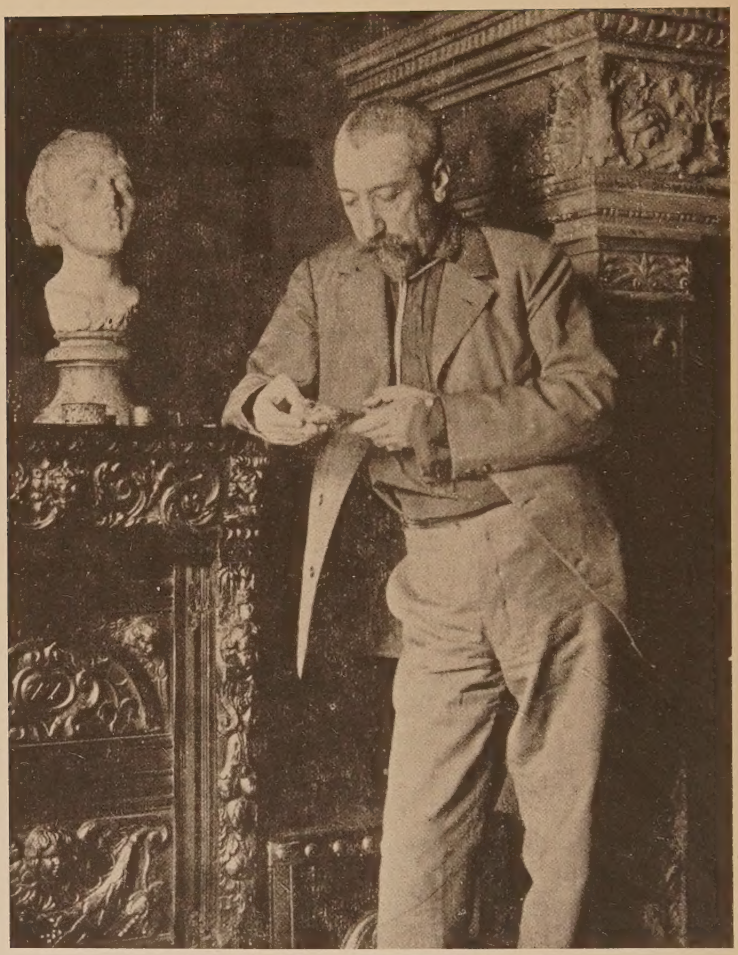

ANATOLE FRANCE AT HOME

His house was as full of beautiful things, as his head was of wonderful thoughts. His is the most cultivated mind of the modern world. To read him is to encounter the most interesting intelligence of our time—and be held spellbound!

MOTHER OF PEARL

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

A TRANSLATION BY
FREDERIC CHAPMAN

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THE PROCURATOR OF JUDÆA

MOTHER OF PEARL

THE PROCURATOR OF JUDÆA

ÆLIUS LAMIA, born in Italy of illustrious parents, had not yet discarded the *toga prætexta* when he set out for the schools of Athens to study philosophy. Subsequently he took up his residence at Rome, and in his house on the Esquiline, amid a circle of youthful wastrels, abandoned himself to licentious courses. But being accused of engaging in criminal relations with Lepida, the wife of Sulpicius Quirinus, a man of consular rank, and being found guilty, he was exiled by Tiberius Cæsar. At that time he was just entering his twenty-fourth year. During the eighteen years that his exile lasted he traversed Syria, Palestine, Cappadocia, and Armenia, and made prolonged visits to Antioch, Cæsarea, and Jerusalem. When, after the death of Tiberius, Caius was raised to the purple, Lamia obtained permission to return to Rome. He even regained a portion of his possessions. Adversity had taught him wisdom.

He avoided all intercourse with the wives and daughters of Roman citizens, made no efforts towards obtaining office, held aloof from public honours, and lived a secluded life in his house on the Esquiline. Occupying himself with the task of recording all the remarkable things he had seen during his distant travels, he turned, as he said, the vicissitudes of his years of expiation into a diversion for his hours of rest. In the midst of these calm employments, alternating with assiduous study of the works of Epicurus, he recognized with a mixture of surprise and vexation that age was stealing upon him. In his sixty-second year, being afflicted with an illness which proved in no slight degree troublesome, he decided to have recourse to the waters at Baiæ. The coast at that point, once frequented by the halcyon, was at this date the resort of the wealthy Roman, greedy of pleasure. For a week Lamia lived alone, without a friend in the brilliant crowd. Then one day, after dinner, an inclination to which he yielded urged him to ascend the incline, which, covered with vines that resembled bacchantes, looked out upon the waves.

Having reached the summit he seated himself by the side of a path beneath a terebinth, and let his glances wander over the lovely landscape. To

his left, livid and bare, the Phlegræan plain stretched out towards the ruins of Cumæ. On his right, Cape Misenum plunged its abrupt spur beneath the Tyrrhenian sea. Beneath his feet luxurious Baiæ, following the graceful outline of the coast, displayed its gardens, its villas thronged with statues, its porticos, its marble terraces along the shores of the blue ocean where the dolphins sported. Before him, on the other side of the bay, on the Campanian coast, gilded by the already sinking sun, gleamed the temples which far away rose above the laurels of Posilippo, whilst on the extreme horizon Vesuvius looked forth smiling.

Lamia drew from a fold of his toga a scroll containing the *Treatise upon Nature,* extended himself upon the ground, and began to read. But the warning cries of a slave necessitated his rising to allow of the passage of a litter which was being carried along the narrow pathway through the vineyards. The litter being uncurtained, permitted Lamia to see stretched upon the cushions as it was borne nearer to him the figure of an elderly man of immense bulk, who, supporting his head on his hand, gazed out with a gloomy and disdainful expression. His nose, which was aquiline, and his chin, which was prominent, seemed desirous of meeting across his lips, and his jaws were powerful.

From the first moment Lamia was convinced that the face was familiar to him. He hesitated a moment before the name came to him. Then suddenly hastening towards the litter with a display of surprise and delight—

"Pontius Pilate!" he cried. "The gods be praised who have permitted me to see you once again!"

The old man gave a signal to the slaves to stop, and cast a keen glance upon the stranger who had addressed him.

"Pontius, my dear host," resumed the latter, "have twenty years so far whitened my hair and hollowed my cheeks that you no longer recognize your friend Ælius Lamia?"

At this name Pontius Pilate dismounted from the litter as actively as the weight of his years and the heaviness of his gait permitted him, and embraced Ælius Lamia again and again.

"Gods! what a treat it is to me to see you once more! But, alas, you call up memories of those long-vanished days when I was Procurator of Judæa in the province of Syria. Why, it must be thirty years ago that I first met you. It was at Cæsarea, whither you came to drag out your weary term of exile. I was fortunate enough to alleviate it a little, and out of friendship, Lamia, you followed

me to that depressing place Jerusalem, where the Jews filled me with bitterness and disgust. You remained for more than ten years my guest and my companion, and in converse about Rome and things Roman we both of us managed to find consolation—you for your misfortunes, and I for my burdens of State."

Lamia embraced him afresh.

"You forget two things, Pontius; you are overlooking the facts that you used your influence on my behalf with Herod Antipas, and that your purse was freely open to me."

"Let us not talk of that," replied Pontius, "since after your return to Rome you sent me by one of your freedmen a sum of money which repaid me with usury."

"Pontius, I could never consider myself out of your debt by the mere payment of money. But tell me, have the gods fulfilled your desires? Are you in the enjoyment of all the happiness you deserve? Tell me about your family, your fortunes, your health."

"I have withdrawn to Sicily, where I possess estates, and where I cultivate wheat for the market. My eldest daughter, my best-beloved Pontia, who has been left a widow, lives with me, and directs my household. The gods be praised, I have pre-

served my mental vigour; my memory is not in the least degree enfeebled. But old age always brings in its train a long procession of griefs and infirmities. I am cruelly tormented with gout. And at this very moment you find me on my way to the Phlegræan plain in search of a remedy for my sufferings. From that burning soil, whence at night flames burst forth, proceed acrid exhalations of sulphur, which, so they say, ease the pains and restore suppleness to the joints. At least, the physicians assure me that it is so."

"May you find it so in your case, Pontius! But, despite the gout and its burning torments, you scarcely look as old as myself, although in reality you must be my senior by ten years. Unmistakably you have retained a greater degree of vigour than I ever possessed, and I am overjoyed to find you looking so hale. Why, dear friend, did you retire from the public service before the customary age? Why, on resigning your governorship in Judæa, did you withdraw to a voluntary exile on your Sicilian estates? Give me an account of your doings from the moment that I ceased to be a witness of them. You were preparing to suppress a Samaritan rising when I set out for Cappadocia, where I hoped to draw some profit from the breeding of horses and

mules. I have not seen you since then. How did that expedition succeed? Pray tell me. Everything interests me that concerns you in any way."

Pontius Pilate sadly shook his head.

"My natural disposition," he said, "as well as a sense of duty, impelled me to fulfil my public responsibilities, not merely with diligence, but even with ardour. But I was pursued by unrelenting hatred. Intrigues and calumnies cut short my career in its prime, and the fruit it should have looked to bear has withered away. You ask me about the Samaritan insurrection. Let us sit down on this hillock. I shall be able to give you an answer in few words. Those occurrences are as vividly present to me as if they had happened yesterday.

"A man of the people, of persuasive speech—there are many such to be met with in Syria—induced the Samaritans to gather together in arms on Mount Gerizim (which in that country is looked upon as a holy place) under the promise that he would disclose to their sight the sacred vessels which in the ancient days of Evander and our father, Æneas, had been hidden away by an eponymous hero, or rather a tribal deity, named Moses. Upon this assurance the Samaritans rose in rebellion; but having been warned in time to fore-

stall them, I dispatched detachments of infantry to occupy the mountain, and stationed cavalry to keep the approaches to it under observation.

"These measures of prudence were urgent. The rebels were already laying siege to the town of Tyrathaba, situated at the foot of Mount Gerizim. I easily dispersed them, and stifled the as yet scarcely organized revolt. Then, in order to give a forcible example with as few victims as possible, I handed over to execution the leaders of the rebellion. But you are aware, Lamia, in what strait dependence I was kept by the proconsul Vitellius, who governed Syria not in, but against the interests of Rome, and looked upon the provinces of the empire as territories which could be farmed out to tetrarchs. The head-men among the Samaritans, in their resentment against me, came and fell at his feet lamenting. To listen to them, nothing had been further from their thoughts than to disobey Cæsar. It was I who had provoked the rising, and it was purely in order to withstand my violence that they had gathered together round Tyrathaba. Vitellius listened to their complaints, and handing over the affairs of Judæa to his friend Marcellus, commanded me to go and justify my proceedings before the Emperor himself. With a heart overflowing with grief and resentment I took ship.

Just as I approached the shores of Italy, Tiberius, worn out with age and the cares of empire, died suddenly on the selfsame Cape Misenum, whose peak we see from this very spot magnified in the mists of evening. I demanded justice of Caius, his successor, whose perception was naturally acute, and who was acquainted with Syrian affairs. But marvel with me, Lamia, at the maliciousness of fortune, resolved on my discomfiture. Caius then had in his suite at Rome the Jew Agrippa, his companion, the friend of his childhood, whom he cherished as his own eyes. Now Agrippa favoured Vitellius, inasmuch as Vitellius was the enemy of Antipas, whom Agrippa pursued with his hatred. The Emperor adopted the prejudices of his beloved Asiatic, and refused even to listen to me. There was nothing for me to do but bow beneath the stroke of unmerited misfortune. With tears for my meat and gall for my portion, I withdrew to my estates in Sicily, where I should have died of grief if my sweet Pontia had not come to console her father. I have cultivated wheat, and succeeded in producing the fullest ears in the whole province. But now my life is ended; the future will judge between Vitellius and me."

"Pontius," replied Lamia, "I am persuaded that you acted towards the Samaritans according to the

rectitude of your character, and solely in the interests of Rome. But were you not perchance on that occasion a trifle too much influenced by that impetuous courage which has always swayed you? You will remember that in Judæa it often happened that I who, younger than you, should naturally have been more impetuous than you, was obliged to urge you to clemency and suavity."

"Suavity towards the Jews!" cried Pontius Pilate. "Although you have lived amongst them, it seems clear that you ill understand those enemies of the human race. Haughty and at the same time base, combining an invincible obstinacy with a despicably mean spirit, they weary alike your love and your hatred. My character, Lamia, was formed upon the maxims of the divine Augustus. When I was appointed Procurator of Judæa, the world was already penetrated with the majestic ideal of the *pax romana*. No longer, as in the days of our internecine strife, were we witnesses to the sack of a province for the aggrandisement of a proconsul. I knew where my duty lay. I was careful that my actions should be governed by prudence and moderation. The gods are my witnesses that I was resolved upon mildness, and upon mildness only. Yet what did my benevolent intentions avail me? You were at my side, Lamia, when, at the outset of my

career as ruler, the first rebellion came to a head. Is there any need for me to recall the details to you? The garrison had been transferred from Cæsarea to take up its winter quarters at Jerusalem. Upon the ensigns of the legionaries appeared the presentment of Cæsar. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, who did not recognize the indwelling divinity of the Emperor, were scandalized at this, as though, when obedience is compulsory, it were not less abject to obey a god than a man. The priests of their nation appeared before my tribunal imploring me with supercilious humility to have the ensigns removed from within the holy city. Out of reverence for the divine nature of Cæsar and the majesty of the empire, I refused to comply. Then the rabble made common cause with the priests, and all around the pretorium portentous cries of supplication arose. I ordered the soldiers to stack their spears in front of the tower of Antonia, and to proceed, armed only with sticks like lictors, to disperse the insolent crowd. But, heedless of blows, the Jews continued their entreaties, and the more obstinate amongst them threw themselves on the ground and, exposing their throats to the rods, deliberately courted death. You were a witness of my humiliation on that occasion, Lamia. By the order of Vitellius I was forced to send the insignia back to Cæsarea. That

disgrace I had certainly not merited. Before the immortal gods I swear that never once during my term of office did I flout justice and the laws. But I am grown old. My enemies and detractors are dead. I shall die unavenged. Who will now retrieve my character?"

He moaned and lapsed into silence. Lamia replied—

"That man is prudent who neither hopes nor fears anything from the uncertain events of the future. Does it matter in the least what estimate men may form of us hereafter? We ourselves are after all our own witnesses, and our own judges. You must rely, Pontius Pilate, on the testimony you yourself bear to your own rectitude. Be content with your own personal respect and that of your friends. For the rest, we know that mildness by itself will not suffice for the work of government. There is but little room in the actions of public men for that indulgence of human frailty which the philosophers recommend."

"We'll say no more at present," said Pontius. "The sulphureous fumes which rise from the Phlegræan plain are more powerful when the ground which exhales them is still warm beneath the sun's rays. I must hasten on. Adieu! But now that I have rediscovered a friend, I should

wish to take advantage of my good fortune. Do me the favour, Ælius Lamia, to give me your company at supper at my house to-morrow. My house stands on the seashore, at the extreme end of the town in the direction of Misenum. You will easily recognize it by the porch which bears a painting representing Orpheus surrounded by tigers and lions, whom he is charming with the strains from his lyre.

"Till to-morrow, Lamia," he repeated, as he climbed once more into his litter. "To-morrow we will talk about Judæa."

The following day at the supper hour Lamia presented himself at the house of Pontius Pilate. Two couches only were in readiness for occupants. Creditably but simply equipped, the table held a silver service in which were set out beccaficos in honey, thrushes, oysters from the Lucrine lake, and lampreys from Sicily. As they proceeded with their repast, Pontius and Lamia interchanged inquiries with one another about their ailments, the symptoms of which they described at considerable length, mutually emulous of communicating the various remedies which had been recommended to them. Then, congratulating themselves on being thrown together once more at Baiæ, they vied with

one another in praise of the beauty of that enchanting coast and the mildness of the climate they enjoyed. Lamia was enthusiastic about the charms of the courtesans who frequented the seashore laden with golden ornaments and trailing draperies of barbaric broidery. But the aged Procurator deplored the ostentation with which by means of trumpery jewels and filmy garments foreigners and even enemies of the empire beguiled the Romans of their gold. After a time they turned to the subject of the great engineering feats that had been accomplished in the country; the prodigious bridge constructed by Caius between Puteoli and Baiæ, and the canals which Augustus excavated to convey the waters of the ocean to Lake Avernus and the Lucrine lake.

"I also," said Pontius, with a sigh, "I also wished to set afoot public works of great utility. When, for my sins, I was appointed Governor of Judæa, I conceived the idea of furnishing Jerusalem with an abundant supply of pure water by means of an aqueduct. The elevation of the levels, the proportionate capacity of the various parts, the gradient for the brazen reservoirs to which the distribution pipes were to be fixed—I had gone into every detail, and decided everything for myself with the assistance of mechanical experts. I had drawn up regulations

for the superintendents so as to prevent individuals from making unauthorized depredations. The architects and the workmen had their instructions. I gave orders for the commencement of operations. But far from viewing with satisfaction the construction of that conduit, which was intended to carry to their town upon its massive arches not only water but health, the inhabitants of Jerusalem gave vent to lamentable outcries. They gathered tumultuously together, exclaiming against the sacrilege and impiousness, and, hurling themselves upon the workmen, scattered the foundation stones. Can you picture to yourself, Lamia, a filthier set of barbarians? Nevertheless, Vitellius decided in their favour, and I received orders to put a stop to the work."

"It is a knotty point," said Lamia, "how far one is justified in devising things for the commonweal against the will of the populace."

Pontius Pilate continued as though he had not heard this interruption.

"Refuse an aqueduct! What madness! But whatever is of Roman origin is distasteful to the Jews. In their eyes we are an unclean race, and our very presence appears a profanation to them. You will remember that they would never venture to enter the pretorium for fear of defiling themselves, and that I was consequently obliged to dis-

charge my magisterial functions in an open-air tribunal on that marble pavement your feet so often trod.

"They fear us and they despise us. Yet is not Rome the mother and warden of all those peoples who nestle smiling upon her venerable bosom? With her eagles in the van, peace and liberty have been carried to the very confines of the universe. Those whom we have subdued we look on as our friends, and we leave those conquered races, nay, we secure to them the permanence of their customs and their laws. Did Syria, aforetime rent asunder by its rabble of petty kings, ever even begin to taste of peace and prosperity until it submitted to the armies of Pompey? And when Rome might have reaped a golden harvest as the price of her goodwill, did she lay hands on the hoards that swell the treasuries of barbaric temples? Did she despoil the shrine of Cybele at Pessinus, or the Morimene and Cilician sanctuaries of Jupiter, or the temple of the Jewish god at Jerusalem? Antioch, Palmyra, and Apamea, secure despite their wealth, and no longer in dread of the wandering Arab of the desert, have erected temples to the genius of Rome and the divine Cæsar. The Jews alone hate and withstand us. They withhold their tribute till it is wrested

from them, and obstinately rebel against military service."

"The Jews," replied Lamia, "are profoundly attached to their ancient customs. They suspected you, unreasonably I admit, of a desire to abolish their laws and change their usages. Do not resent it, Pontius, if I say that you did not always act in such a way as to disperse their unfortunate illusion. It gratified you, despite your habitual self-restraint, to play upon their fears, and more than once have I seen you betray in their presence the contempt with which their beliefs and religious ceremonies inspired you. You irritated them particularly by giving instructions for the sacerdotal garments and ornaments of their high priest to be kept in ward by your legionaries in the Antonine tower. One must admit that though they have never risen like us to an appreciation of things divine, the Jews celebrate rites which their very antiquity renders venerable."

Pontius Pilate shrugged his shoulders.

"They have very little exact knowledge of the nature of the gods," he said. "They worship Jupiter, yet they abstain from naming him or erecting a statue of him. They do not even adore him under the semblance of a rude stone, as certain of the Asiatic peoples are wont to do. They know

nothing of Apollo, of Neptune, of Mars, nor of Pluto, nor of any goddess. At the same time, I am convinced that in days gone by they worshipped Venus. For even to this day their women bring doves to the altar as victims; and you know as well as I that the dealers who trade beneath the arcades of their temple supply those birds in couples for sacrifice. I have even been told that on one occasion some madman proceeded to overturn the stalls bearing these offerings, and their owners with them. The priests raised an outcry about it, and looked on it as a case of sacrilege. I am of opinion that their custom of sacrificing turtle-doves was instituted in honour of Venus. Why are you laughing, Lamia?"

"I was laughing," said Lamia, "at an amusing idea which, I hardly know how, just occurred to me. I was thinking that perchance some day the Jupiter of the Jews might come to Rome and vent his fury upon you. Why should he not? Asia and Africa have already enriched us with a considerable number of gods. We have seen temples in honour of Isis and the dog-faced Anubis erected in Rome. In the public squares, and even on the race-courses, you may run across the Bona Dea of the Syrians mounted on an ass. And did you never hear how, in the reign of Tiberius, a young patrician

passed himself off as the horned Jupiter of the Egyptians, Jupiter Ammon, and in this disguise procured the favours of an illustrious lady who was too virtuous to deny anything to a god? Beware, Pontius, lest the invisible Jupiter of the Jews disembark some day on the quay at Ostia!"

At the idea of a god coming out of Judæa, a fleeting smile played over the severe countenance of the Procurator. Then he replied gravely—

"How would the Jews manage to impose their sacred law on outside peoples when they are in a perpetual state of tumult amongst themselves as to the interpretation of that law? You have seen them yourselves, Lamia, in the public squares, split up into twenty rival parties, with staves in their hands, abusing each other and clutching one another by the beard. You have seen them on the steps of the temple, tearing their filthy garments as a symbol of lamentation, with some wretched creature in a frenzy of prophetic exaltation in their midst. They have never realized that it is possible to discuss peacefully and with an even mind those matters concerning the divine which yet are hidden from the profane and wrapped in uncertainty. For the nature of the immortal gods remains hidden from us, and we cannot arrive at a knowledge of it. Though I am of opinion, none the less, that it is a

prudent thing to believe in the providence of the gods. But the Jews are devoid of philosophy, and cannot tolerate any diversity of opinions. On the contrary, they judge worthy of the extreme penalty all those who on divine subjects profess opinions opposed to their law. And as, since the genius of Rome has towered over them, capital sentences pronounced by their own tribunals can only be carried out with the sanction of the proconsul or the procurator, they harry the Roman magistrate at any hour to procure his signature to their baleful decrees, they besiege the pretorium with their cries of 'Death!' A hundred times, at least, have I known them, mustered, rich and poor together, all united under their priests, make a furious onslaught on my ivory chair, seizing me by the skirts of my robe, by the thongs of my sandals, and all to demand of me—nay, to exact from me—the death sentence on some unfortunate whose guilt I failed to perceive, and as to whom I could only pronounce that he was as mad as his accusers. A hundred times, do I say! Not a hundred, but every day and all day. Yet it was my duty to execute their law as if it were ours, since I was appointed by Rome not for the destruction, but for the upholding of their customs, and over them I had the power of the rod and the axe. At the outset of

my term of office I endeavoured to persuade them to hear reason; I attempted to snatch their miserable victims from death. But this show of mildness only irritated them the more; they demanded their prey, fighting around me like a horde of vultures with wing and beak. Their priests reported to Cæsar that I was violating their law, and their appeals, supported by Vitellius, drew down upon me a severe reprimand. How many times did I long, as the Greeks used to say, to dispatch accusers and accused in one convoy to the crows!

"Do not imagine, Lamia, that I nourish the rancour of the discomfited, the wrath of the superannuated, against a people which in my person has prevailed against both Rome and tranquillity. But I foresee the extremity to which sooner or later they will reduce us. Since we cannot govern them, we shall be driven to destroy them. Never doubt it. Always in a state of insubordination, brewing rebellion in their inflammatory minds, they will one day burst forth upon us with a fury beside which the wrath of the Numidians and the mutterings of the Parthians are mere child's play. They are secretly nourishing preposterous hopes, and madly premeditating our ruin. How can it be otherwise, when, on the strength of an oracle, they are living in expectation of the coming of a prince of their

own blood whose kingdom shall extend over the whole earth? There are no half measures with such a people. They must be exterminated. Jerusalem must be laid waste to the very foundation. Perchance, old as I am, it may be granted me to behold the day when her walls shall fall and the flames shall envelop her houses, when her inhabitants shall pass under the edge of the sword, when salt shall be strown on the place where once the temple stood. And in that day I shall at length be justified."

Lamia exerted himself to lead the conversation back to a less acrimonious note.

"Pontius," he said, "it is not difficult for me to understand both your long-standing resentment and your sinister forebodings. Truly, what you have experienced of the character of the Jews is nothing to their advantage. But I lived in Jerusalem as an interested onlooker, and mingled freely with the people, and I succeeded in detecting certain obscure virtues in these rude folk which were altogether hidden from you. I have met Jews who were all mildness, whose simple manners and faithfulness of heart recalled to me what our poets have related concerning the Spartan lawgiver. And you yourself, Pontius, have seen perish beneath the cudgels of your legionaries simple-minded men who

have died for a cause they believed to be just without revealing their names. Such men do not deserve our contempt. I am saying this because it is desirable in all things to preserve moderation and an even mind. But I own that I never experienced any lively sympathy for the Jews. The Jewesses, on the contrary, I found extremely pleasing. I was young then, and the Syrian women stirred all my senses to response. Their ruddy lips, their liquid eyes that shone in the shade, their sleepy gaze pierced me to the very marrow. Painted and stained, smelling of nard and myrrh, steeped in odours, their physical attractions are both rare and delightful."

Pontius listened impatiently to these praises.

"I was not the kind of man to fall into the snares of the Jewish women," he said; " and since you have opened the subject yourself, Lamia, I was never able to approve of your laxity. If I did not express with sufficient emphasis formerly how culpable I held you for having intrigued at Rome with the wife of a man of consular rank, it was because you were then enduring heavy penance for your misdoings. Marriage from the patrician point of view is a sacred tie; it is one of the institutions which are the support of Rome. As to foreign women and slaves, such relations as one

may enter into with them would be of little account were it not that they habituate the body to a humiliating effeminacy. Let me tell you that you have been too liberal in your offerings to the Venus of the Market-place; and what, above all, I blame in you is that you have not married in compliance with the law and given children to the Republic, as every good citizen is bound to do."

But the man who had suffered exile under Tiberius was no longer listening to the venerable magistrate. Having tossed off his cup of Falernian, he was smiling at some image visible to his eye alone.

After a moment's silence he resumed in a very deep voice, which rose in pitch by little and little—

"With what languorous grace they dance, those Syrian women! I knew a Jewess at Jerusalem who used to dance in a poky little room, on a threadbare carpet, by the light of one smoky little lamp, waving her arms as she clanged her cymbals. Her loins arched, her head thrown back, and, as it were, dragged down by the weight of her heavy red hair, her eyes swimming with voluptuousness, eager, languishing, compliant, she would have made Cleopatra herself grow pale with envy. I was in love with her barbaric dances, her voice—a little raucous and yet so sweet—her atmosphere of incense, the semi-somnolescent state in which she seemed to live.

I followed her everywhere. I mixed with the vile rabble of soldiers, conjurers, and extortioners with which she was surrounded. One day, however, she disappeared, and I saw her no more. Long did I seek her in disreputable alleys and taverns. It was more difficult to learn to do without her than to lose the taste for Greek wine. Some months after I lost sight of her, I learned by chance that she had attached herself to a small company of men and women who were followers of a young Galilean thaumaturgist. His name was Jesus; he came from Nazareth, and he was crucified for some crime, I don't quite know what. Pontius, do you remember anything about the man?"

Pontius Pilate contracted his brows, and his hand rose to his forehead in the attitude of one who probes the deeps of memory. Then after a silence of some seconds—

"Jesus?" he murmured, "Jesus—of Nazareth? I cannot call him to mind."

AMYCUS AND CELESTINE

TO GEORGES DE PORTO-RICHE

AMYCUS AND CELESTINE

PRONE upon the threshold of his rude cavern the hermit Celestine passed in prayer the eve of the Easter Festival, that unearthly night upon which the shuddering demons are hurled into the abyss. And whilst the shades still enveloped the earth, at the moment when the exterminating angel winged his flight across Egypt, Celestine shivered, for he was seized with anguish and unease. He heard from afar in the forest the cries of the wild cats and the shrill voices of the frogs. Immersed in the unholy darkness, he even doubted whether the glorious mystery could come to pass. But when he saw the first signals of the day, gladness entered into his heart together with the dawn; he realized that Christ was risen from the dead, and cried—

"Jesus is arisen from the grave. Love has conquered death. Alleluia! He is risen all glorious from the foot of the hill. Alleluia! The whole creation is restored and made anew. Darkness and evil are put to flight. Light and pardon encompass the world. Alleluia!"

A lark, awakened amidst the wheat, answered him with song.

"He is risen again. I have dreamed of nests and eggs—white eggs, flecked with brown. Alleluia! He is risen again."

Then the hermit Celestine left his cavern to go to the neighbouring chapel and celebrate the holy Easter Feast.

As he passed through the forest he saw in the midst of a glade a splendid beech, whose bursting buds already gave passage to tiny leaves of a tender green. Garlands of ivy and fillets of wool were hung upon its branches, which spread out groundwards. Votive tablets fastened to its gnarled trunk spoke of youth and love, and here and there some Eros, fashioned in clay, shorn of garments and with outspread wings, balanced himself lightly upon a branch. At this sight the hermit Celestine knitted his whitened brows.

"It is the fairies' tree," he said, "and the country maidens, according to ancient custom, have laden it with offerings. My life is passed in struggling against these fairies, and no one could conceive the annoyance these tiny creatures cause me. They do not openly rebel against me. Each year at harvest time I exorcise the tree with the customary rites, and sing the Gospel of St. John to them.

"There is nothing better to be done. Holy water and the Gospel of St. John have power to put them to flight, and there is nothing more heard of the little damsels throughout the winter; but in the spring back they come once more, and each year one must begin all over again.

"And they are subtle; a single bush of hawthorn is large enough to shelter a swarm. And they cast their spells upon the young folks, both the youths and the maidens.

"As I have grown older my sight has become dim and now I can scarcely perceive their presence. They make a mock of me, sport under my nose and laugh in my beard. But when I was only twenty, I often saw them in the clearings dancing in circles beneath the light of the moon like garlands of flowers. Oh, Lord God, Thou who madest the heaven and the dew, praised be Thou in Thy works. But why didst Thou create unholy trees and fairy springs? Why hast Thou planted beneath the hazel the screaming mandrake? These things of nature seduce the young to sin, and are the cause of unnumbered labours to anchorites who, like myself, have undertaken the sanctification of Thy creatures. If only the Gospel of St. John still availed to put the demons to flight! But it is no longer enough, and I am perplexed to know what to do."

And as the good hermit went sighing on his way, the tree—for it was a fairy tree—called to him with a fresh rustling.

"Celestine! Celestine! My buds are eggs—true Easter eggs. Alleluia! Alleluia!"

Celestine plunged into the wood without turning his head. He made his way with difficulty by a narrow path through the midst of thorns which tore his gown, when suddenly the road was barred to him by a young lad who came bounding out of a thicket. He was half-clothed in the skin of some beast, and was indeed rather a faun than a boy. His glance was penetrating, his nose flattened, his countenance laughing. His curly hair concealed the two little horns upon his stubborn forehead; his lips disclosed white pointed teeth; a fair forked beard descended from his chin. Upon his chest a golden down shone. He was agile and slender, and his cloven feet were hidden in the grass.

Celestine who had made himself possessor of all the wisdom to be won by meditation, saw at once with whom he had to do, and raised his arm to make the sign of the cross. But the faun, seizing his hand, prevented him from completing the mighty spell.

"Good hermit," said he, "do not exorcise me. For me, as for you, this day is a day of festival.

You would be wanting in charity if you should plunge me in grief during the Easter Feast. If you are willing, we will stroll along together, and you will see that I am not malicious."

By good fortune Celestine was well versed in the sacred sciences. He recalled to himself in these circumstances that St. Jerome in the desert had had for fellow-travellers both satyrs and centaurs who had confessed the Truth.

He said to the faun—

"Faun, raise a hymn to God. Declare: He is risen."

"He is indeed arisen," replied the faun. "And behold me all gladness thereupon."

Here the path widened, so that they walked side by side. The hermit became pensive, and reflected—

"He cannot be a demon since he has witnessed to the Truth. It is well that I refrained from grieving him. The example of the great St. Jerome has not been lost upon me."

Then, turning towards his goat-footed companion, he asked him—

"What is your name?"

"I am called Amycus," replied the faun. "I dwell in the wood, where I was born. I came to you, good father, because behind your long white

beard your countenance was kindly. It seems to me that hermits must be fauns borne down by the years. When I am grown old I shall be like unto you."

"He is risen," said the hermit.

"He is indeed arisen," said Amycus.

And thus conversing they climbed the hill on which arose a chapel consecrated to the true God. It was small and of homely construction. Celestine had built it with his own hands with the fragments of a temple of Venus. Within, the table of the Lord stood forth shapeless and uncovered.

"Let us fall down," said the hermit, "and sing Alleluia, for He is arisen. And do you, mysterious being, remain kneeling whilst I offer the holy sacrifice."

But the faun drew near to the hermit, and stroked his beard, and said—

"Venerable old man, you are wiser than I, and you can discern that which is invisible. But the woods and the springs are better known to me than to you. I will bring to God leafage and blossoms. I know the banks where the cress half opens its lilac clusters, the meadows where the cowslip blossoms in yellow bunches. I detect by its faint odour the mistletoe upon the wild apple tree. Already the blackthorn bushes are decked with a

snowy crown of flowers. Wait for me, good father."

With three goat-like leaps he was back in the woods, and when he returned Celestine fancied he beheld a walking hawthorn tree. Amycus had disappeared beneath his odorous harvest. He hung garlands of flowers about the rustic altar; he sprinkled it with violets, and said solemnly—

"I dedicate these flowers to the God who gave them being."

And whilst Celestine celebrated the sacrifice of the mass, the goat-footed one bowed his horned head down to the very ground and worshipped the sun, and said—

"The earth is a vast egg which thou, O Sun, most holy Sun, dost render fruitful."

From that day forward Celestine and Amycus lived together in fellowship. The hermit never succeeded, despite all his endeavours, in making the half-human creature understand the ineffable mysteries; but as through the exertions of Amycus the chapel of the true God was constantly hung with garlands, and more gaily decked than the fairies' tree, the holy priest said—

"The faun is himself a hymn to God."

And it was for this reason that he bestowed on him the rite of holy baptism.

Upon the hill where Celestine once raised the meagre chapel which Amycus garlanded with flowers from the hills, the woods, and the streams, there stands at the present day a church the nave of which goes back to the eleventh century, whilst the porch dates from the period of Henry II, when it was rebuilt in the style of the Renaissance. It is a place of pilgrimage, and the faithful assemble there to hold in pious memory the saints Amycus and Celestine.

THE LEGEND OF SAINTS OLIVERIA AND LIBERETTA

TO MADEMOISELLE JEANNE POUQUET

THE LEGEND OF SAINTS OLIVERIA AND LIBERETTA

CHAPTER I

How Messire St. Berthold, son of Theodulus, King of Scotland, came over to the Ardennes to preach to the inhabitants of the Pays Porcin.

HE forest of the Ardennes extended at that time as far as the waters of the Aisne, and covered the Pays Porcin, in which now rises the town of Rethel. Its ravines swarmed with innumerable boars, stags of immense height of a species now extinct thronged in the impenetrable thickets, and wolves of prodigious strength were encountered in winter on the skirts of the woods. The basilisk and the unicorn had their quarters in that forest, as well as a frightful dragon, which later on, by the grace of God, met with destruction at the prayers of a holy hermit. And because in those days the mysteries of nature were revealed to men, and for the glory of the Creator things which were naturally invisible became visible, it

was common to meet in the clearings nymphs, satyrs, centaurs, and aigypans.

Now it is in no respect doubtful that these malevolent beings have indeed been seen just as they have been described in the fables of the pagans. But it must be remembered that they are devils, as is apparent by their feet, which are cloven. Unhappily the fairies are not so easy to detect; these have all the appearance of damsels, and at times the resemblance is so pronounced that one must possess all the prudence of a hermit if one would avoid being deceived. The fairies also are demons, and there were in the forest of the Ardennes great numbers of them. It was for this very reason that that forest so abounded in mystery and horror.

The Romans in the time of Cæsar had consecrated it to Diana, and the inhabitants of the Pays Porcin on the shores of the Aisne worshipped an idol in the form of a woman. They made offerings to her of cakes, milk, and honey, and sang hymns in her honour.

Now Berthold, the son of Theodulus, King of Scotland, having received holy baptism, lived in the palace of his father, more after the fashion of a hermit than of a prince. Close shut in his apartment, he spent the livelong day in reciting prayers and meditating upon the Holy Scriptures, and the

desire kindled in him to imitate the labours of the apostles. Having learned through a miraculous source the abominations of the Pays Porcin, he straightway loathed and resolved to put an end to them.

He crossed the sea in a ship which had neither sail nor rudder, and which was drawn by a swan. Happily arrived in the Pays Porcin, he wandered through the villages, the walled towns, and the castles, announcing the glad tidings.

"The God whom I preach to you," he said, "is the only true God. He is one God in three Persons, and His Son was born of a Virgin."

But these rude men answered him—

"Youthful stranger, it is very simple on your part to imagine that there is but one God. For the gods are countless. They dwell in the woods, the mountains, and the streams. There are even gods so intimate that they do not disdain a place by the hearths of pious men. Others, again, take up their station in the stables and byres, and so the race of the gods fills the whole universe. But what you have to say about a Divine Virgin is not without warrant. We know of a Virgin with a threefold countenance to whom we sing canticles, and say, 'Hail most benign! Hail most terrible!' She is called Diana, and beneath her silvery tread

under the pale beams of the moon the mountain thyme bursts into blossom. She has not disdained to receive upon her couch blossoming hyacinths, the offering of shepherds and huntsmen like ourselves. Nevertheless, she remains ever virgin."

Thus spake these ignorant men whilst they drove the apostle to the confines of the village, and pursued him with mocking words.

CHAPTER II

Of the meeting between Messire St. Berthold and the two sisters Oliveria and Liberetta.

NOW one day as he pursued his journey, overcome with weariness and grief, he fell in with two young girls, who were setting forth from their castle for a jaunt in the woods. He made several steps toward them, and then stood off at a distance for fear of alarming them, and said—

"Give ear, young virgins. I am Berthold, son of Theodulus, King of Scotland. But I have disdained perishable crowns that I might be worthy at last to receive at the hand of the angels the Crown that fadeth not away. And I journeyed hither in a ship, drawn by a swan, to bring you the glad tidings."

"Sir Berthold," replied the elder, "my name is Oliveria, and that of my sister is Liberetta. Our father, Thierry, who is also called Porphyrodimus, is the wealthiest lord in the country.

Willingly will we listen to your good tidings. But you appear overcome with fatigue. I counsel you to go and await us in the hall of our father, who is at this moment drinking the good ale with his friends. When he learns that you are a Scottish prince, he will without question assign you a place at his table. Farewell, till we meet again, Sir Berthold. We are going, my sister and I, to gather flowers as an offering to Diana."

But the apostle Berthold replied—

"It is not for me to go and seat myself at a pagan's table. This Diana whom you imagine to be a heavenly virgin is in very truth a demon out of hell. The true God is one God in three Persons, and Jesus Christ His Son became Man and died upon the cross for the salvation of all men. And verily I tell you, Oliveria and Liberetta, a drop of His blood flowed on behalf of each one of you."

Then he discoursed to them with so much ardour of the holy mysteries, that the hearts of the two sisters were moved thereby. The elder sister took up the discourse anew.

"Sir Berthold," she said, "you disclose unheard-of mysteries. But it is not always an easy matter to distinguish truth from error. It would be painful to us to abandon our devotion to Diana.

Nevertheless, let but a sign of the truth of your words appear to us, and we will believe in Jesus crucified."

But the younger sister said to the apostle—

"My sister Oliveria has asked for a sign because she is of a prudent nature and full of wisdom. But if your God is the true God, Sir Berthold, would that I might know and love Him without being impelled by a sign."

The man of God understood by these words that Liberetta was born to become a great saint. And on this account he replied—

"Sister Liberetta and Sister Oliveria, I have resolved to retire into that forest, there to lead the eremitical life which is both desirable and rare. I shall dwell in a hut of interlaced boughs, and support life upon roots. I shall pray unceasingly to God to change the hearts of the men of this country, and I shall bestow my benediction on the springs, so that the fairy folk may cease to come thither for the beguiling of sinners. Nevertheless, my sister Oliveria shall receive the sign for which she has asked. And a messenger sent by the Lord himself shall guide you both to my hermitage in order that I may instruct you in the faith of Jesus Christ."

Having spoken after this fashion, St. Berthold

gave his blessing to the two sisters with the imposition of hands. After which he fared forth into the forest, from which he never afterwards emerged.

CHAPTER III

How the unicorn came to the hall of Thierry, otherwise called Porphyrodimus, and conducted the two sisters Oliveria and Liberetta to the retreat of Messire St. Berthold, and of divers marvels that ensued.

NOW one day, being alone in the kitchen, Oliveria was spinning wool beneath the chimney canopy when she saw approach her a beast of a perfect whiteness which had the body of a goat and the head of a horse, and which bore on its forehead a shining spear. Oliveria immediately recognized what animal it was, and as she had maintained her innocence she was not in the least afraid, being aware that the unicorn never does any harm to discreet maidens. And indeed the unicorn did but place his head gently upon Oliveria's knees. Then turning again towards the door, by the direction of its eyes it invited the young girl to follow it without.

Oliveria immediately called her sister, but when Liberetta entered the room the unicorn had dis-

appeared; and so it came about that Liberetta, in accordance with her desire, acknowledged the true God without having been constrained by a sign.

The two sisters set forth in the direction of the forest, and the unicorn, who had once more become visible, walked ahead of them. They pursued throughout their journey the trail of the wild beasts. And it came to pass that when they had reached the depths of the wood, they saw the unicorn take to the water and swim across a torrent. Now when they came to the water's edge they were aware that it was both wide and deep. They leaned over it to see if perchance there might be any stepping-stones by means of which they could cross, but none such could they discover. Now whilst they were leaning upon a willow and gazing upon the foaming waters, the tree bent down suddenly and bore them without effort to the opposite shore.

Thus, then, they arrived at the hermitage, where St. Berthold imparted unto them the words of life. Upon their return, the willow uprearing itself again bore them back to the other side.

Each day they betook themselves to the dwelling of the holy man, and when they returned to their own home they found that all the thread on their distaffs had been spun by invisible hands. For these

reasons, then, having received baptism, they believed in Jesus Christ.

For more than a year they received instruction from St. Berthold, when Thierry their father, who was also called Porphyrodimus, was seized with a cruel malady. Being aware that the end of their father was drawing nigh, his daughters instructed him in the Christian faith. He acknowledged the truth. And so it came about that his death was most meritorious. He was ensepulchred near to his mortal home in a place known as the Giant's Mountain, and in after days his tomb was venerated throughout the Pays Porcin.

Meanwhile the two sisters repaired daily to the dwelling of the holy hermit Berthold, and they gathered from his lips the words of life. But on a certain day when the rivers were greatly swollen by the melted snows, Oliveria, as she went through the vineyards, took a prop that she might with greater security cross the torrent whose much widened stream sped along riotously.

Liberetta, disdaining all human aid, declined to follow her example. She was the first to reach the torrent, her hands armed solely with the sign of the cross. And the willow bent down in its customary way. Then it rose erect once more, and when Oliveria in her turn desired to pass over

it remained motionless. And the current broke her prop as if it had been a wisp of straw and carried it away. And Oliveria remained still on the hither side. But since she was discreet she recognized that she was justly punished for having doubted the heavenly powers, and for not having committed herself to the grace of God after the manner of her sister Liberetta. Thereafter she had no other thought but to win pardon for herself by works of penitence and self-denial. So being resolved, after the example of St. Berthold, to lead the eremitical life which is both desirable and rare, she remained in the forest on this side of the torrent, and built herself a hut of boughs interlaced at a spot where a spring gushed forth, which has since received the name of St. Olive's well.

CHAPTER IV

How Messire St. Berthold, and Mesdames Saints Liberetta and Oliveria came to their blissful consummation.

IBERETTA having arrived at the dwelling of the blessed Berthold alone, found him in a contemplative attitude quite dead. His body, attenuated by fasting, exhaled a delicious fragrance. With her own hands she buried him. From this day forward the virgin Liberetta, having taken leave of the world, led the eremitical life on the other side of the torrent, in a hut by the edge of a spring, which has since been known as the well of St. Liberetta, or Liberia, whose miraculous waters cure fevers as well as divers maladies with which cattle are afflicted.

The two sisters never saw one another again in this world. But, by the intercession of the blessed Berthold, God sent into the Ardennes from the country of the Lombards the deacon Vulfaï, or Valfroy, who overturned the idol of Diana and converted the inhabitants of the Pays Porcin to the Christian faith. Thereupon Oliveria and Liberetta were overwhelmed with joy.

But a little time after this the Lord called to Himself his servant Liberetta, and sent the unicorn to dig a grave and bury the body of the saint. Oliveria was aware, through a revelation, of the blissful death of her sister, Liberetta, and a voice said to her—

"Because you asked for a sign before you would believe, and took a prop to lean upon, the hour of your blissful death will be delayed and the day of your consummation postponed."

And Oliveria replied to the voice—

"May the will of the Lord be done on earth as it is in heaven."

She lived ten years longer in expectation of eternal beatitude, which commenced for her in the month of October, in the year of Our Lord 364.

ST. EUPHROSINE

TO GASTON-ARMAN DE CAILLAVET

ST. EUPHROSINE

The acts of St. Euphrosine of Alexandria, in religion Brother Smaragdus, as they were set forth in the Laura on Mount Athos by George the Deacon.

EUPHROSINE was the only daughter of a rich citizen of Alexandria, named Romulus, who was careful to have her instructed in music, dancing, and arithmetic in such fashion that at the close of her childhood she displayed a subtle and unusually adorned intelligence. She had not yet completed her eleventh year when the magistrates of Alexandria caused to be announced in the streets that a golden cup would be awarded as a prize to whomsoever should produce an exact reply to the three following questions.

First Question: I am the dusky child of a luminous sire; a wingless bird, yet I rise to the clouds. With no spark of malice, I yet draw tears from the eyes I encounter. Scarcely am I born when I vanish into air. Tell me, friend, what is my name?

Second Question: I beget my mother, yet am

by her brought forth, and sometimes I am longer and sometimes shorter. Tell me, friend, what is my name?

Third Question: Antipater possesses as much as Nicomedes and a third of the share of Themistius. Nicomedes possesses as much as Themistius and a third of what Antipater owns. Themistius possesses ten minas and a third of what Nicomedes owns. What is the sum which belongs to each?

Now, on the day set apart for the gathering, a number of young men presented themselves before the judges in the hope of winning the golden cup, but not one of them gave correct replies. The president was about to bring the sitting to an end when the youthful Euphrosine, in her turn drawing near to the tribunal, asked to be heard. Every one admired the modesty of her bearing and the winsome shamefacedness which lent a blush to her cheeks.

"Most illustrious judges," she said, lowering her eyes, "after having given the glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, the beginning and the end of all wisdom I will endeavour to reply to the questions which your worships have propounded, and I will begin with the first. The dusky child is smoke, which is born of fire, rises in the air, and by its

pungency draws tears from our eyes. So much for the first question.

"Now to reply to the second. That which begets its mother and is by her brought forth is nothing other than the day, which is sometimes long and sometimes short, according to the season. So much for the second question.

"And now to answer the third. Antipater possesses forty-five minas, Nicomedes has but thirty-seven and a half, whilst Themistius has twenty-two and a half. That is my third answer."

The judges, marvelling at the correctness of these replies, awarded the prize to the youthful Euphrosine. Thereupon the most venerable among them, having risen, presented her with the golden cup, and encircled her forehead with a garland of papyrus by way of honouring the keen intelligence she had displayed. Then the virgin was conducted home to her father's house to the sound of flutes amidst a great concourse of people.

But as she was a Christian and pious in no ordinary degree, far from being puffed up with these honours, she recognized their emptiness, and resolved that in the future she would apply the keenness of her intelligence to the solution of problems more worthy of attention—as, for example, the computation of the sum of the numbers

represented by the letters of the name of Jesus, and the consideration of the wonderful properties of these numbers.

Meanwhile she grew in wisdom and in beauty, and was sought in marriage by very many young men. Amongst these was the Count Longinus, who possessed great wealth. Romulus received this suitor favourably, hoping that an alliance with this powerful man might assist him in the rehabilitation of his own affairs, which had got into disorder through his vast expenditure upon his palace, his plate, and his gardens. Romulus, who was one of the most lavish amongst the inhabitants of Alexandria, had above all squandered considerable sums in gathering together in his mansion, beneath a vast cupola, the most wonderful examples of mechanism, such as a globe as brilliant as a sapphire, bearing on it the heavenly constellations set out with exactitude in precious stones. There were also to be seen in this chamber a fountain, constructed by Hero, which distributed perfumed waters, and two mirrors so cunningly contrived that they converted the gazer, the one into a person of extreme height and slenderness, and the other into a person equally short and stout. But the most marvellous sight in this mansion was a hawthorn bush all covered with

birds, which by ingenious mechanism both sang and fluttered their wings as if they had been alive. Romulus had expended the remains of his wealth in the acquisition of these mechanical toys, which fascinated him. This, then, was the reason for his favourable reception of the Count Longinus, the possessor of great wealth. He urged forward by all means in his power the consummation of a marriage from which he anticipated both happiness for his daughter and relief from anxiety in his old age. But each time that he recounted to Euphrosine the claims of Count Longinus, she turned her glance aside without making any reply. One day he said to her—

"Will you not admit, my daughter, that he is the handsomest, the wealthiest, and the noblest citizen in all Alexandria?"

Euphrosine replied discreetly—

"Willingly do I admit it, dear father. Indeed, I am convinced that Count Longinus surpasses all the citizens of this town in noble birth, worldly possessions, and personal beauty. Consequently, if I refuse to accept him as a husband there is little likelihood that any other will succeed where he has failed, and induce me to change my resolution, which is to consecrate my virginity to Jesus Christ."

When he heard of this determination Romulus

fell into a violent passion, and swore that he knew well enough how to force Euphrosine to espouse Count Longinus; and without breaking forth into idle threats, he added that this marriage was resolved upon in his mind, and that it would be carried through without delay, whilst if his paternal authority did not suffice he would add to it that of the Emperor, who being divine, would not allow a daughter to disobey her father in a matter which was of so much public and State importance as the marriage of a woman of patrician rank.

Euphrosine was aware that her father had great influence with the Emperor, who at that time lived at Constantinople. She perceived that in this perilous situation she had no hope of assistance except from Count Longinus himself. On this account she entreated him to come to her in the basilica for a private interview.

Impelled by hope as well as curiosity, Count Longinus betook himself to the basilica all bedecked with gold and precious stones. The maiden did not make him wait. But when he saw her appear with dishevelled hair, wrapped in a black veil like a suppliant, he drew an evil augury from the sight, and his heart was disturbed.

Euphrosine was the first to speak.

"Most illustrious Longinus," she said to him,

"if you love me as much as you declare, you will fear to do aught displeasing to me; and, indeed, it would be giving me a mortal blow were you to lead me away to your house to have your pleasure of this body, which, with my soul, I have dedicated to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the beginning and the end of all love."

But Count Longinus answered her—

"Most illustrious Euphrosine, love is stronger even than our wills; that is why it behoves us to bow before him as before a jealous master. I shall act towards you after the fashion he ordains, which is to take you for my wife."

"Is it becoming that a man—an illustrious man, too—should rob the Lord of His betrothed?"

"As to that, I shall take counsel from the bishops rather than from you."

These plans threw the young girl into the most lively consternation. She realized that she had no compassion to expect from this man of violence, governed altogether by his senses, and that the bishops could not enforce recognition of secret vows made by her to God in solitude. And in the excess of her uneasiness she had recourse to an artifice so singular that it is more to be marvelled at than held up as an example.

Her resolution being taken, she feigned to yield

to the wishes of her father and the entreaties of her lover. She even suffered them to fix a day for the ceremony of betrothal. Count Longinus had already caused the jewels and ornaments destined for his bride to be placed in the marriage coffers; he had ordered for her twelve gowns, upon which were embroidered scenes from the Old and the New Testament, the legends of the Greeks, the history of animals, as well as the divine presentments of the Emperor and Empress, with their retinue of lords and ladies. One of these coffers, moreover, contained books upon theology and arithmetic written in letters of gold upon sheets of parchment, purple tinctured, and preserved between plates of ivory and gold.

Euphrosine, however, remained the day long shut up alone in her chamber, and the reason she gave for her withdrawal was that it behoved her to make ready her wedding garments.

"It would be most unfitting," she said, "if certain portions of my vesture should be shaped and sewn by any other hands than mine."

And in very truth she wielded her needle from morning till night. But that which she made ready secretly in this fashion was neither the symbolical veil of the virgin nor the white robe of the betrothed. What she prepared was the rough

hood, short tunic, and loose breeches which the young artisans in towns are accustomed to wear while engaged in their labours. And whilst she fulfilled this undertaking she constantly invoked Jesus Christ, the beginning and the end of all the achievements of the upright. For this cause, then, she happily completed her clandestine task on the eighth day before that which had been fixed for the solemnization of the marriage. She remained all that day in prayer; then, after having presented herself, according to her custom, to receive her father's kiss, she returned to her chamber and cut off her hair, which fell to her feet like skeins of gold, donned her short tunic, fastened the breeches about her waist with woollen straps, drew the hood down over her eyes, and, night having fallen, noiselessly left the house whilst all, masters and servants alike, were sleeping. Only the dog was still awake, but as he knew her he followed her for a short time in silence, and then returned to his kennel.

With rapid steps she made her way through the deserted city, where the only sounds audible were the occasional cries of drunken sailors and the heavy tread of the watchman on duty in pursuit of robbers. And since God was with her she suffered no insult from man. Then, having passed through

one of the gates of Alexandria, she set out towards the desert, following the course of the canals covered with papyrus and blue lotus. At the break of day she passed through a wretched village of working people. An old man was singing in front of his door whilst he polished a coffin made of sycamore wood. When she came abreast of him, he raised his hairy and featureless face, and cried out—

"By Jupiter! here comes the infant Eros, carrying a little pot of ointment to his mother! How delicate and pretty he is. In truth, he sparkles with attractiveness. They are liars who say that the gods have departed. For this youth is a veritable little god."

Then the prudent Euphrosine, informed by this speech that the old man was a pagan, had pity upon his ignorance, and prayed to God for his salvation. That prayer was granted. The old man, who was a coffin-maker, bearing the name of Porou, was in course of time converted, and took the name of Philotheos.

Now, after a journey of a whole day, Euphrosine arrived at a monastery where, under the governance of the abbot Onophrius, six hundred monks observed the admirable rule of St. Pacomius. She asked to be led before Onophrius, and said to him—

"My father, I am called Smaragdus, and I am an orphan. I beg you to receive me into your holy habitation, to the end that I may there enjoy the delights of fasting and repentance."

The abbot Onophrius, who had then attained the age of one hundred and six years, replied—

"Smaragdus, my child, beautiful are your feet, for they have guided you to this dwelling; beautiful are your hands, for they have knocked at this door. You hunger and thirst after fasting and abstinence. Come, and you shall be satisfied. Happy the child who flies from the world whilst yet he wears his robe of innocence. The souls of men are exposed to deadly perils in the towns, and particularly in Alexandria, on account of the women who flock there in great numbers. Woman is to man so great a danger that even at my age the thought alone sends a shudder through all my frame. If one with sufficient effrontery should presume to enter into this holy house, my arm would suddenly recover its strength to hale her hence with heavy blows from this pastoral cross. It is our duty, my son, to worship God in all His works; but it is a profound mystery of His providence that He should have created woman. Stay with us, Smaragdus, my child; for it is certainly God who has led you hither."

After having been received in this fashion into the family of the holy man Onophrius, Euphrosine donned the monastic habit.

In her cell she praised the Lord, and rejoiced in her pious fraud upon this consideration, that her father and her lover would not fail to make search for her in all the convents for women in order to apprehend her by order of the Emperor, but that they would never succeed in finding her in this refuge where Jesus Christ Himself had lovingly hidden her.

For three years she led the most edifying life in her cell, and the virtues of the youthful Smaragdus perfumed the monastery. For this cause the abbot Onophrius entrusted her with the duties of guest-master or porter, counting upon the prudence of the young monk as to the reception of strangers, and above all the exclusion of any women who might attempt to enter the monastery. For, said the holy man, woman is impure, and the mere mark of her footsteps is an infectious pollution.

Now Smaragdus had been guest-master for five years, when a stranger knocked at the door of the monastery. It was a man who was still young; his habiliments were magnificent, and he retained a remnant of pride; but he was pale and emaciated,

and his eyes were inflamed with a restless melancholy.

"Brother guest-master," said this man, "conduct me into the presence of the holy abbot Onophrius, that he may assoil me, for I am a prey to a mortal ill."

Smaragdus, having begged the stranger to seat himself upon a stool, informed him that Onophrius, having reached his hundred and fourteenth year, had, in view of his approaching end, gone to visit the caves of the Holy Anchorites, Amon and Orcisus.

At this news the visitor sank down upon the stool and hid his head in his hands.

"I can no longer hope for healing, then," he murmured.

And raising his head again, he added—

"It is the love of a woman that has reduced me to this miserable state."

Not till then did Euphrosine recognize Count Longius. She feared that he likewise might recognize her. But she soon reassured herself, and was seized with pity to see him looking so cast down and discomfited.

After a long silence, Count Longinus exclaimed—

"I would fain become a monk to escape from my despair."

Then he told the story of his love, and how his betrothed, Euphrosine, had suddenly disappeared; how for eight years he had sought her and failed to find her, and how he was consumed and wasted with love and grief.

She answered him with a gentleness that was heavenly.

"My lord, this Euphrosine, whose love you so bitterly deplore, was not worthy of so much love. Her beauty was not so precious, except in the ideal you yourself have formed of it; in truth, it is vile and contemptible. It was perishable, and what remains of it is not worth a regret. You believe yourself unable to live without Euphrosine, and yet, if you should happen to meet her, you might even fail to recognize her."

Count Longinus answered not a word, but this speech, or possibly the voice in which it was pronounced, made a happy impression on his soul. He departed in a more tranquil mood, and promised to return.

And indeed he did return, and being desirous of embracing the monastic life, he asked the holy abbot Onophrius for a cell, and made a gift to the monastery of all his possessions, which were immense. This was a source of great satisfaction to

Euphrosine. But some time after this her heart was overwhelmed with a still greater joy.

It was in this way. A beggar, bending beneath the weight of his satchel and having only sordid rags to cover his nakedness, came to ask a morsel of bread from the charitable monks. In him Euphrosine recognized Romulus, her father; but pretending not to know who he was, she made him sit down, washed his feet, and set food before him.

"Child of God," said the beggar, "I was not always a penniless wanderer such as now you see me. Once I possessed great wealth and a very beautiful daughter, who was also very prudent and very learned. She unravelled the enigmas propounded in the public competitions, and on one occasion even received from the magistrates the papyrus crown. I lost her—I lost all my possessions. I am consumed with regret for my daughter and my wealth. I had above all things a bush full of birds which, by a marvellous contrivance, sang as though naturally. And now I have not even a mantle to cover me. Nevertheless, I should be comforted if before I die I might see once again my well-beloved daughter."

As he concluded these words Euphrosine threw herself at his feet, and said through her tears—

"My father, I am Euphrosine, your daughter, who one night fled from your house. And the dog did not bark. Your pardon, my father. For I have not accomplished these things except by the permission of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And after she had recounted to the old man the manner of her flight, disguised as a workman, to that very house where she had since passed eight peaceful years in hiding, she showed him a mark she had upon her neck. And by this sign Romulus recognized his daughter. He embraced her tenderly and bathed her in his tears, marvelling at the mysterious workings of the Lord.

And for this reason he resolved to become a monk and to take up his abode in the monastery of the holy abbot Onophrius. With his own hands he built himself a cell of reeds next to that of Count Longinus. They chanted the psalms and cultivated the ground. During the hours of rest they conversed upon the vanity of earthly affections and the riches of this world. But Romulus never disclosed anything to anybody concerning his wonderful recognition of his daughter Euphrosine, thinking it much for the best that Count Longinus and the abbot Onophrius should learn the details of her adventures in Paradise, when they would have attained a full understanding of the ways of God. Longinus

never knew that his betrothed was close beside him. All three lived for several years longer in the practice of all the virtues, and by the special favour of Providence they all three fell asleep in the Lord almost at the same time. Count Longinus passed away first. Romulus died two months later, and St. Euphrosine, after she had closed his eyes, was during the same week called to heaven by Jesus Christ with the words: "Come, my dove." St. Onophrius followed them to the tomb, to which he descended full of merits in the hundred and thirty-second year of his age, on the holy day of Easter, in the year 395 after the incarnation of the Son of God. May the archangel St. Michael make intercession for us! Here end the acts of St. Euphrosine. *Amen.*

Such is the narrative of George the Deacon, written in the Laura on Mount Athos at a period which may vary from the seventh to the fourteenth century of the Christian era. As to this I waver, since it is a matter of great uncertainty. This narrative is now for the first time published; I have the best of reasons for being sure on this point. I should be glad to have equally good reasons for thinking that it deserved to be put forth. I have translated with a fidelity which has doubtless been only too perceptible since it has infected my own

style with a Byzantine stiffness the inconvenience of which seems to myself almost intolerable. George the Deacon told his tale with less gracefulness than Herodotus, or Plutarch even. So that one may perceive by his example that periods of decadence are sometimes less impregnated with charm and daintiness than is the common opinion nowadays. This demonstration is perhaps the principal merit my work can claim. That work will be criticized vigorously, and no doubt questions may be put to me to which I may find it difficult to reply. The text which I have followed is not in the hand of George the Deacon. I do not know if it is complete. I foresee that lacunæ and interpolations will be pointed out. Monsieur Schlumberger will hold in suspicion various formularies employed in the course of the narrative, and Monsieur Alfred Rambaud will question the episode of the old man Porou. I reply beforehand that, having but a single text, I could do no other than follow it. It is in very bad condition and hardly legible. But one is bound to declare that all the masterpieces of classical antiquity in which we take such delight have come down to us in the same condition. I have excellent reasons for believing that in transcribing the text of my Deacon I have made tremendous blunders, and that my translation teems

with misconceptions. Possibly even it is nothing but a misconception from beginning to end. If this should not appear so patently as one might fear, it is because invariably the most unintelligible text has some sort of meaning to him who translates it. Were this not the case, erudition would cease to have any reason for continued existence. I have compared the narrative of George the Deacon with the passages in Rufinus and St. Jerome relating to St. Euphrosine. I am bound to say that it does not altogether agree with them. It is doubtless for this reason that my publisher has inserted this learned work in a light collection of tales.

SCHOLASTICA

TO MAURICE SPRONCK

SCHOLASTICA

T the time of which we speak, which was the fourth century of the Christian era, the youthful Injuriosus, only son of a senator of Auvergne (so the municipal officers were called), sought in marriage a young girl named Scholastica, who, like himself, was the only child of a senator. His suit was favourably received. And the marriage ceremony having been celebrated, he conducted her to his house, and led her into the bridal chamber. Whereupon, with a mournful countenance, she turned herself to the wall and wept bitterly.

"What is the cause of your distress? Tell me, I beg of you."

Then, as she maintained silence, he added—

"I entreat you by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to show me plainly the reason for your lamentations."

Then she turned towards him and said—

"If I were to weep every day of life that remains to me, I should not shed tears enough to express the profound grief with which my heart is

filled. This feeble body I had determined to preserve in all purity, and to present my virginity as an offering to Jesus Christ. Alas, and woe is me! that I am in such a fashion forsaken as to be unable to fulfil what I had resolved upon! Oh, day which never should have dawned upon me! Behold me severed from the heavenly spouse who had promised me paradise for a marriage portion, and become the bride of a mortal man, whilst that head which should have been crowned with the roses of immortality, is decked, or rather disfigured, with roses which already begin to wither. Alas! that body which upon the margin of the fourfold stream of the Lamb should have been endued with the garment of purity, bears instead the vile burden of the nuptial veil. Ah! why was not the first day of my life even also the last? Happy had I been had I entered the gates of death ere a single drop of milk had passed my lips! Oh, that the kisses of my gentle nurses had been bestowed upon my bier! When you hold out your hands towards me, I recall the hands which for the salvation of the world were pierced with nails."

And as she finished these words she wept bitterly.

The young man answered her persuasively—

"Scholastica, our parents are of the rich and

noble amongst the dwellers in Auvergne, nor have yours more than a single daughter nor mine than an only son. They wished for our union as a means of continuing their families, lest after their death a stranger should enter into possession of their belongings."

But Scholastica replied—

"This world is nothing, and riches are nothing, and this life itself is nothing. Is that life which is nothing but a waiting upon death? They alone live who, in unending blessedness, bathe in the Light, and know the joy of angels in the possession of God."

At this moment Injuriosus, touched by grace, exclaimed—

"Ah, sweet and simple words, the light of life eternal glances upon my eyes! Scholastica, if you wish to hold fast to that you have resolved, I also at your side will lead a virgin life."

More than half reassured, and already smiling through her tears, she said—

"Injuriosus, for a man to grant to a woman a boon such as this is a difficult matter. But if you should procure that we keep ourselves unspotted from the world, a part of the marriage portion which my spouse and Lord Jesus Christ has promised to me will I give unto you."

Then, fortified by the sign of the cross, he said—

"I shall do that which you desire."

And clasping one another's hands, they fell asleep.

And from that time forward, sharing the same nuptial couch, they passed their days in unexampled chastity. After ten years of trial Scholastica died.

According to the customs of the day, her body was borne into the basilica, in gala dress, and with uncovered face, to the chant of psalms, and followed by the whole populace.

Kneeling down beside her, in a loud voice Injuriosus uttered these words—

"I give Thee hearty thanks, Lord Jesus, that Thou hast bestowed upon me strength to preserve Thy treasure uninjured."

Upon these words, she that was dead rose up upon her funeral couch and smiled, and murmured softly—

"My friend, why do you declare that which no man has asked of you?"

Whereupon she resumed her everlasting rest.

Injuriosus soon followed her to the tomb. They buried him not far from her in the basilica of Saint Allire. The first night after he was laid there

a miraculous rose tree sprang from the grave of the virgin bride and enwrapped both tombs in its flower-besprent embraces. So that on the morrow the folk beheld them bound fast one to the other by chains of roses. Recognizing by this sign the sanctity of the blessed Injuriosus and the blessed Scholastica, the priests of Auvergne held up these shrines to the veneration of the faithful. But in this province, which had been evangelized by Saints Allire and Nepotian, pagans still dwelt. One of these, by name Sylvanus, still held sacred the springs dedicated to the nymphs, hung votive pictures upon the branches of an ancient oak, and cherished by his fireside little images in clay representing the sun and the goddesses of fruitfulness. Half hidden amid the foliage, the garden god watched over his orchard. Sylvanus passed his declining years in the writing of verse. He composed eclogues and elegies in a style a little stiff perhaps, but not wanting in skill, and into these poems, whenever he could manage to do so, he introduced verses from the bards of old. With the general populace he too visited the spot where the Christian spouses were laid, and the good man marvelled at the rose tree which decked the two tombs. And as, after his fashion, he was pious, he recognized therein a heavenly sign. But he attributed the prodigy to

his own gods, and doubted nothing that the rose tree flourished by the will of Eros.

Said he: "Now that she is nothing but a vain shadow, the tristful Scholastica regrets the hours when love was timely and the pleasures she renounced. These roses, which come forth from her body and express her thoughts, say to us who still survive: Love while ye may. This prodigy indeed instructs us to taste the joys of life while it is yet time."

Thus reflected this simple pagan. Upon this subject he composed an elegy which by the greatest of chances I unearthed in the public library at Tarascon, on the binding of a Bible of the eleventh century, catalogued Michel Chasles Collection F *n* 7439, 17[9] *bis*. The precious leaf which had so far escaped the notice of the learned, contains not fewer than eighty-four lines in a fairly legible Merovingian script probably dating from the seventh century. The text begins with these words—

Nunc piget; et quaeris, quod non aut ista volontas
Tunc fuit. . . .[1]

and finishes in this fashion—

Stringamus maesti carminis obsequio.[2]

[1] Now regret rankles, and thou cravest that
Thou didst reject. . . .
[2] Weave we the tribute of a mournful song.

I shall not fail to publish the complete text so soon as I have finished deciphering it. And I do not doubt that Monsieur Leopold Delisle himself will undertake to present this invaluable document to the Academy of Inscriptions.

OUR LADY'S JUGGLER

TO GASTON PARIS

OUR LADY'S JUGGLER

IN the days of King Louis there was a poor juggler in France, a native of Compiègne, Barnaby by name, who went about from town to town performing feats of skill and strength.

On fair days he would unfold an old worn-out carpet in the public square, and when by means of a jovial address, which he had learned of a very ancient juggler, and which he never varied in the least, he had drawn together the children and loafers, he assumed extraordinary attitudes, and balanced a tin plate on the tip of his nose. At first the crowd would feign indifference.

But when, supporting himself on his hands face downwards, he threw into the air six copper balls, which glittered in the sunshine, and caught them again with his feet; or when throwing himself backwards until his heels and the nape of the neck met, giving his body the form of a perfect wheel, he would juggle in this posture with a dozen knives, a murmur of admiration would escape the spectators, and pieces of money rain down upon the carpet.

Nevertheless, like the majority of those who live

by their wits, Barnaby of Compiègne had a great struggle to make a living.

Earning his bread in the sweat of his brow, he bore rather more than his share of the penalties consequent upon the misdoings of our father Adam.

Again, he was unable to work as constantly as he would have been willing to do. The warmth of the sun and the broad daylight were as necessary to enable him to display his brilliant parts as to the trees if flower and fruit should be expected of them. In winter time he was nothing more than a tree stripped of its leaves, and as it were dead. The frozen ground was hard to the juggler, and, like the grasshopper of which Marie de France tells us, the inclement season caused him to suffer both cold and hunger. But as he was simple-natured he bore his ills patiently.

He had never meditated on the origin of wealth, nor upon the inequality of human conditions. He believed firmly that if this life should prove hard, the life to come could not fail to redress the balance, and this hope upheld him. He did not resemble those thievish and miscreant Merry Andrews who sell their souls to the devil. He never blasphemed God's name; he lived uprightly, and although he had no wife of his own, he did not covet his neighbour's, since woman is ever the

enemy of the strong man, as it appears by the history of Samson recorded in the Scriptures.

In truth, his was not a nature much disposed to carnal delights, and it was a greater deprivation to him to forsake the tankard than the Hebe who bore it. For whilst not wanting in sobriety, he was fond of a drink when the weather waxed hot. He was a worthy man who feared God, and was very devoted to the Blessed Virgin.

Never did he fail on entering a church to fall upon his knees before the image of the Mother of God, and offer up this prayer to her:

"Blessed Lady, keep watch over my life until it shall please God that I die, and when I am dead, ensure to me the possession of the joys of paradise."

II

OW on a certain evening after a dreary wet day, as Barnaby pursued his road, sad and bent, carrying under his arm his balls and knives wrapped up in his old carpet, on the watch for some barn where, though he might not sup, he might sleep, he perceived on the road, going in the same direction as himself, a monk, whom he saluted courteously. And as they walked at the same rate they fell into conversation with one another.

"Fellow traveller," said the monk, "how comes it about that you are clothed all in green? Is it perhaps in order to take the part of a jester in some mystery play?"

"Not at all, good father," replied Barnaby. "Such as you see me, I am called Barnaby, and for my calling I am a juggler. There would be no pleasanter calling in the world if it would always provide one with daily bread."

"Friend Barnaby," returned the monk, "be careful what you say. There is no calling more pleas-

ant than the monastic life. Those who lead it are occupied with the praises of God, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints; and, indeed, the religious life is one ceaseless hymn to the Lord."

Barnaby replied—

"Good father, I own that I spoke like an ignorant man. Your calling cannot be in any respect compared to mine, and although there may be some merit in dancing with a penny balanced on a stick on the tip of one's nose, it is not a merit which comes within hail of your own. Gladly would I, like you, good father, sing my office day by day, and especially, the office of the most Holy Virgin, to whom I have vowed a singular devotion. In order to embrace the monastic life I would willingly abandon the art by which from Soissons to Beauvais I am well known in upwards of six hundred towns and villages."

The monk was touched by the juggler's simplicity, and as he was not lacking in discernment, he at once recognized in Barnaby one of those men of whom it is said in the Scriptures: Peace on earth to men of good will. And for this reason he replied—

"Friend Barnaby, come with me, and I will have you admitted into the monastery of which I am Prior. He who guided St. Mary of Egypt in the

desert set me upon your path to lead you into the way of salvation."

It was in this manner, then, that Barnaby became a monk. In the monastery into which he was received the religious vied with one another in the worship of the Blessed Virgin, and in her honour each employed all the knowledge and all the skill which God had given him.

The prior on his part wrote books dealing according to the rules of scholarship with the virtues of the Mother of God.

Brother Maurice, with a deft hand copied out these treatises upon sheets of vellum.

Brother Alexander adorned the leaves with delicate miniature paintings. Here were displayed the Queen of Heaven seated upon Solomon's throne, and while four lions were on guard at her feet, around the nimbus which encircled her head hovered seven doves, which are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gifts, namely, of Fear, Piety, Knowledge, Strength, Counsel, Understanding, and Wisdom. For her companions she had six virgins with hair of gold, namely, Humility, Prudence, Seclusion, Submission, Virginity, and Obedience.

At her feet were two little naked figures, perfectly white, in an attitude of supplication. These were souls imploring her all-powerful intercession

for their soul's health, and we may be sure not imploring in vain.

Upon another page facing this, Brother Alexander represented Eve, so that the Fall and the Redemption could be perceived at one and the same time—Eve the Wife abased, and Mary the Virgin exalted.

Furthermore, to the marvel of the beholder, this book contained presentments of the Well of Living Waters, the Fountain, the Lily, the Moon, the Sun, and the Garden enclosed of which the Song of Songs tells us, the Gate of Heaven and the City of God, and all these things were symbols of the Blessed Virgin.

Brother Marbode was likewise one of the most loving children of Mary.

He spent all his days carving images in stone, so that his beard, his eyebrows, and his hair were white with dust, and his eyes continually swollen and weeping; but his strength and cheerfulness were not diminished, although he was now well gone in years, and it was clear that the Queen of Paradise still cherished her servant in his old age. Marbode represented her seated upon a throne, her brow encircled with an orb-shaped nimbus set with pearls. And he took care that the folds of her dress should cover the feet of her,

concerning whom the prophet declared: My beloved is as a garden enclosed.

Sometimes, too, he depicted her in the semblance of a child full of grace, and appearing to say, "Thou art my God, even from my mother's womb."

In the priory, moreover, were poets who composed hymns in Latin, both in prose and verse, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and amongst the company was even a brother from Picardy who sang the miracles of Our Lady in rhymed verse and in the vulgar tongue.

III

EING a witness of this emulation in praise and the glorious harvest of their labours, Barnaby mourned his own ignorance and simplicity.

"Alas!" he sighed, as he took his solitary walk in the little shelterless garden of the monastery, " wretched wight that I am, to be unable, like my brothers, worthily to praise the Holy Mother of God, to whom I have vowed my whole heart's affection. Alas! alas! I am but a rough man and unskilled in the arts, and I can render you in service, blessed Lady, neither edifying sermons, nor treatises set out in order according to rule, nor ingenious paintings, nor statues truthfully sculptured, nor verses whose march is measured to the beat of feet. No gift have I, alas!"

After this fashion he groaned and gave himself up to sorrow. But one evening, when the monks were spending their hour of liberty in conversation, he heard one of them tell the tale of a religious man who could repeat nothing other than the Ave Maria. This poor man was despised for his ignorance; but after his death there issued forth from

his mouth five roses in honour of the five letters of the name Mary (Marie), and thus his sanctity was made manifest.

Whilst he listened to this narrative Barnaby marvelled yet once again at the loving kindness of the Virgin; but the lesson of that blessed death did not avail to console him, for his heart overflowed with zeal, and he longed to advance the glory of his Lady, who is in heaven.

How to compass this he sought but could find no way, and day by day he became the more cast down, when one morning he awakened filled full with joy, hastened to the chapel, and remained there alone for more than an hour. After dinner he returned to the chapel once more.

And, starting from that moment, he repaired daily to the chapel at such hours as it was deserted, and spent within it a good part of the time which the other monks devoted to the liberal and mechanical arts. His sadness vanished, nor did he any longer groan.

A demeanour so strange awakened the curiosity of the monks.

These began to ask one another for what purpose Brother Barnaby could be indulging so persistently in retreat.

The prior, whose duty it is to let nothing escape him in the behaviour of his children in religion, resolved to keep a watch over Barnaby during his withdrawals to the chapel. One day, then, when he was shut up there after his custom, the prior, accompanied by two of the older monks, went to discover through the chinks in the door what was going on within the chapel.

They saw Barnaby before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, head downwards, with his feet in the air, and he was juggling with six balls of copper and a dozen knives. In honour of the Holy Mother of God he was performing those feats, which aforetime had won him most renown. Not recognizing that the simple fellow was thus placing at the service of the Blessed Virgin his knowledge and skill, the two old monks exclaimed against the sacrilege.

The prior was aware how stainless was Barnaby's soul, but he concluded that he had been seized with madness. They were all three preparing to lead him swiftly from the chapel, when they saw the Blessed Virgin descend the steps of the altar and advance to wipe away with a fold of her azure robe the sweat which was dropping from her juggler's forehead.

Then the prior, falling upon his face upon the pavement, uttered these words—

"Blessed are the simple-hearted, for they shall see God."

"Amen!" responded the old brethren, and kissed the ground.

THE MASS OF SHADOWS

TO MONSIEUR JEAN FRANÇOIS BLADÉ,

OF AGEN,

THE "PIOUS CHRONICLER" WHO HAS COLLECTED THE POPULAR TALES OF GASCONY

THE MASS OF SHADOWS

HIS tale the sacristan of the church of St. Eulalie at Neuville d'Aumont told me, as we sat under the arbour of the White Horse, one fine summer evening, drinking a bottle of old wine to the health of the dead man, now very much at his ease, whom that very morning he had borne to the grave with full honours, beneath a pall powdered with smart silver tears.

"My poor father, who is dead" (it is the sacristan who is speaking), "was in his lifetime a gravedigger. He was of an agreeable disposition, the result, no doubt, of the calling he followed, for it has often been pointed out that people who work in cemeteries are of a jovial turn. Death has no terrors for them: they never give it a thought. I, for instance, Monsieur, enter a cemetery at night as little perturbed as though it were the arbour of the White Horse. And if by chance I meet with a ghost, I don't disturb myself in the least about it, for I reflect that he may just as likely have business of his own to attend to as I. I know the habits of

the dead, and I know their character. Indeed, so far as that goes, I know things of which the priests themselves are ignorant. If I were to tell you all I have seen you would be astounded. But a still tongue makes a wise head, and my father, who, all the same delighted in spinning a yarn, did not disclose a twentieth part of what he knew. To make up for this he often repeated the same stories, and to my knowledge he told the story of Catherine Fontaine at least a hundred times.

"Catherine Fontaine was an old maid whom he well remembered having seen when he was a mere child. I should not be surprised if there were still, perhaps, three old fellows in the district who could remember having heard folks speak of her, for she was very well known and of excellent reputation, although poor enough. She lived at the corner of the Rue aux Nonnes, in the turret which is still to be seen there, and which formed part of an old half-ruined mansion looking on to the garden of the Ursuline nuns. On that turret can still be traced certain figures and half-obliterated inscriptions. The late Curé of St. Eulalie, Monsieur Levasseur asserted that there are the words in Latin, *Love is stronger than death,* 'which is to be understood,' so he would add, 'of divine love.'

"Catherine Fontaine lived by herself in this tiny

apartment. She was a lacemaker. You know, of course, that the lace made in our part of the world was formerly held in high esteem. No one knew anything of her relatives or friends. It was reported that when she was eighteen years of age she had loved the young Chevalier d'Aumont-Cléry, and been secretly affianced to him. But decent folk didn't believe a word of it, and said it was nothing but a tale which had been concocted because Catherine Fontaine's demeanour was that of a lady rather than of a working woman, and because, moreover, she possessed beneath her white locks the remains of great beauty. Her expression was sorrowful, and on one finger she wore one of those rings fashioned by the goldsmith into the semblance of two tiny hands clasped together. In former days folks were accustomed to exchange such rings at their betrothal ceremony. I am sure you know the sort of thing I mean.

"Catherine Fontaine lived a saintly life. She spent a great deal of time in the churches, and every morning, whatever might be the weather, she went to assist at the six o'clock Mass at St. Eulalie.

"Now one December night, whilst she was abed in her little chamber, she was awakened by the sound of bells, and nothing doubting that they

were ringing for the first Mass, the pious woman dressed herself and came downstairs and out into the street. The night was so obscure that not even the walls of the house were visible, and not a ray of light shone from the murky sky. And such was the silence amid this black darkness, that there was not even the sound of a distant dog barking, and a feeling of aloofness from every living creature was perceptible. But Catherine Fontaine knew well every single stone she stepped on, and as she could have found the way to the church with her eyes shut, she reached without difficulty the corner of the Rue aux Nonnes and the Rue de la Paroisse, where the timbered house stands with the tree of Jesse carved on one of its massive beams. When she reached the spot she perceived that the church doors were open, and that a great light was streaming out from the wax tapers. She resumed her journey, and when she had passed through the porch she found herself in the midst of a vast congregation which entirely filled the church. But she did not recognize any of the worshippers, and was surprised to observe that all these people were dressed in velvets and brocades, with feathers in their hats, and that they wore swords in the fashion of days gone by. Here were gentlemen who carried tall canes with gold knobs, and ladies with lace

caps fastened with coronet-shaped combs. Chevaliers of the Order of St. Louis extended their hands to these ladies, who concealed behind their fans painted faces, of which only the powdered brow and the patch at the corner of the eye were visible! And all of them proceeded to take up their places without the slightest sound, and as they moved neither the sound of their footsteps on the pavement nor the rustle of their garments could be heard. The lower places were filled with a crowd of young artisans in brown jackets, dimity breeches, and blue stockings, with their arms round the waists of very pretty blushing girls who lowered their eyes. Near the holy water stoups peasant women, in scarlet petticoats and laced bodices, sat upon the ground as immovable as domestic animals, whilst young lads, standing up behind them, stared out from wide-open eyes and twirled their hats round and round on their fingers, and all these silent countenances seemed centred irremovably on one and the same thought, at once sweet and sorrowful. On her knees, in her accustomed place, Catherine Fontaine saw the priest advance towards the altar, preceded by two servers. She recognized neither priest nor clerks. The Mass began. It was a silent Mass, during which neither the sound of the moving lips nor the tinkle of the bell, vainly

swung to and fro, was audible. Catherine Fontaine felt that she was under the observation and the influence also of her mysterious neighbour, and when, scarcely turning her head, she stole a glance at him, she recognized the young Chevalier d'Aumont-Cléry who had once loved her, and who had been dead for five-and-forty years. She recognized him by a small mark which he had over the left ear, and, above all, by the shadow which his long black eyelashes cast upon his cheeks. He was dressed in his hunting clothes, scarlet with gold lace, the very clothes he wore that day when he met her in St. Leonard's Wood, begged her for a drink, and stole a kiss. He had preserved his youth and his good looks. When he smiled he still displayed magnificent teeth. Catherine said to him in an undertone—

" 'Monseigneur, you who were my friend, and to whom in days gone by I gave all that a girl holds most dear, may God keep you in His grace! O, that he would at length inspire me with regret for the sin I committed in yielding to you; for it is a fact that, though my hair is white and I approach my end, I have not yet repented of having loved you. But, dear dead friend and noble seigneur, tell me, who are these folk, habited after the antique fashion, who are here assisting at this silent Mass?'

"The Chevalier d'Aumont-Cléry replied in a voice

feebler than a breath, but none the less crystal clear—

" 'Catherine, these men and women are souls from purgatory who have grieved God by sinning as we ourselves sinned through love of the creature, but who are not on that account cast off by God, inasmuch as their sin, like ours, was not deliberate.

" 'Whilst, separated from those they loved upon earth, they are purified in the cleansing fires of purgatory, they suffer the pangs of absence, which is for them the most cruel of tortures. They are so unhappy that an angel from heaven takes pity upon their love-torment. By the permission of the Most High, for one hour in the night, he reunites each year lover to loved in their parish church, where they are permitted to assist at the Mass of Shadows, hand clasped in hand. These are the facts. If it has been granted to me to see thee here before thy death, Catherine, it is a boon which has been bestowed by God's special permission.'

"And Catherine Fontaine answered him—

" 'I would die gladly enough, dear, dead lord, if I might recover the beauty that was mine when I gave you to drink in the forest.'

"Whilst they conversed thus under their breath, a very old canon was taking the collection and proffering to the worshippers a great copper dish, wherein

they let fall, each in his turn, ancient coins which have long since ceased to pass current: écus of six livres, florins, ducats and ducatoons, jacobuses and rose-nobles, and the pieces fell silently into the dish. When at length it was placed before the Chevalier, he dropped into it a louis which made no more sound than had the other pieces of gold and silver.

"Then the old canon stopped before Catherine Fontaine, who fumbled in her pocket without being able to find a farthing. Then, being unwilling to allow the dish to pass without an offering from herself, she slipped from her finger the ring which the Chevalier had given her the day before his death, and cast it into the copper bowl. As the golden ring fell, a sound like the heavy clang of a bell rang out, and on the stroke of this reverberation the Chevalier, the canon, the celebrant, the servers, the ladies and their cavaliers, the whole assembly vanished utterly; the candles guttered out, and Catherine Fontaine was left alone in the darkness."

Having concluded his narrative after this fashion, the sacristan drank a long draught of wine, remained pensive a moment, and then resumed his talk in these words:—

"I have told you this tale exactly as my father has told it to me over and over again, and I believe that

it is authentic, because it agrees in all respects with what I have myself observed of the manners and customs peculiar to those who have passed away. I have associated a good deal with the dead ever since my childhood, and I know that they are accustomed to return to what they have loved.

"It is on this account that the miserly dead wander at night in the neighbourhood of the treasures they concealed during their lifetime. They keep a strict watch over their gold; but the trouble they give themselves, far from being of service to them, turns to their disadvantage; and it is not at all a rare thing to come upon money buried in the ground on digging in a place haunted by a ghost. In the same way deceased husbands come by night to harass their wives who have made a second matrimonial venture, and I could easily name several who have kept a better watch over their wives since death than ever they did while living.

"That sort of thing is blameworthy, for in all fairness the dead have no business to stir up jealousies. Still I do but tell you what I have observed myself. It is a matter to take into account if one marries a widow. Besides, the tale I have told you is vouched for in the manner following:

"The morning after that extraordinary night Catherine Fontaine was discovered dead in her

chamber. And the beadle attached to St. Eulalie found in the copper bowl used for the collection a gold ring with two clasped hands. Besides, I'm not the kind of man to make jokes. Suppose we order another bottle of wine? . . ."

LESLIE WOOD

TO THE COMTESSE DE MARTEL-JANVILLE

LESLIE WOOD

HERE was music and private theatricals at Madame N——'s reception in the Boulevard Malesherbes.

Whilst on the outskirts of a display of bare shoulders the younger men at the doorway were suffocating in the stifling, scented air, we older guests, not without grumbling, were keeping ourselves cool in a little *salon* from which we could see nothing, and to which the voice of Mademoiselle Réjane only penetrated like the slightly metallic sound of a dragon-fly's flight. From time to time we could hear the laughter and applause burst forth in the sweltering room, and we were disposed to extend a mild tolerance to the entertainment we did not share. We were exchanging fairly amusing trivialities, when one of the company, a genial deputy, Monsieur B——, remarked—

"Did you know that Wood was here?"

At this statement each in turn exclaimed—

"Wood? Leslie Wood? It's impossible. It is ten years since he was seen in Paris. Nobody knows what's become of him."

"The story goes that he has established a black republic on the shores of the Victoria Nyanza."

"What a tale! You know, of course, that he is fabulously wealthy, and that he is a past master in achieving the impossible. Well, he is living in Ceylon, in a fairy palace, in the midst of enchanted gardens, where the bayadères never cease dancing night and day."

"How can any one believe such balderdash? The truth is, that Leslie Wood has gone off with a Bible and a carbine to convert the Zulus."

Monsieur B—— interrupted in an undertone—

"There he is; there, do you see?"

And he drew our attention by a slight movement of the head and eyes to a man leaning against the doorway, dominating by his lofty stature the heads of the crowd huddled in front of him. He seemed engrossed in the performance.

That athletic carriage, the ruddy face with the white whiskers, the penetrating eyes and calm gaze, they could belong to no one else but Leslie Wood.

Recalling the inimitable letters which for ten years he contributed to the *World*, I said to Monsieur B——

"That man is the foremost journalist of our time."

"You may possibly be right," replied B——.

"At any rate, I am ready to assert that for twenty years past no one has known Europe as thoroughly as Leslie Wood."

Baron Moïse, who was following our talk, shook his head.

"You don't know the real Wood. I know him myself, though. He was before all things a financier. He had a better grasp of the money market than any one I know. What are you laughing at, Princess?"

Lolling expansively on the sofa, and in gloomy depression at being unable to smoke a cigarette, the Princess Zévorine had smiled.

"You neither of you understand Mr. Wood—neither of you," she said. "He was always a mystic and a lover, never anything else."

"I can't agree to that," replied Baron Moïse. "But I should be very glad to know where this devil of a fellow has been spending the best ten years of his life."

"And at what period do you place those best ten years of life?"

"Between the fiftieth and sixtieth years; a man's position is made by then, and he has nothing to do but enjoy his existence."

"Baron, you can question Wood himself. He is coming towards us."

The applause, this time rising to a furious pitch like the fall of a heavy body or the banging of doors, announced the close of the performance. The black-coated contingent leaving the doorways clear overflowed into the smaller *salon,* and as the company made their way in couples in the direction of the buffet, Leslie Wood approached us.

He shook hands with undemonstrative cordiality.

"An apparition! an apparition!" exclaimed Baron Moïse.

"Oh!" rejoined Wood, "one can't reappear from any very remote quarter. The world is small."

"Do you know what the Princess is saying about you, my dear Wood? She declares that you are nothing but a mystic. Now is that true?"

"Well it depends on what you mean by mystic."

"The word is self-explanatory. A mystic is one who is preoccupied with the concerns of the next world. Now you are too well acquainted with the affairs of this world to trouble yourself about the next."

At these words Wood slightly contracted his eyebrows.

"You are quite in the wrong, Moïse. The affairs of the other world are of far, far greater importance than those of the world we live in, Moïse."

"What a man he is, this good Wood of ours!"

exclaimed the Baron, with a sneer. "He is positively witty!"

The Princess replied very seriously—

"Mr. Wood, tell me that you are not witty. I thoroughly detest witty men."

Upon this she rose, and said—

"Mr. Wood, will you take me to the buffet?"

An hour later, when Monsieur G—— was holding both men and women spell-bound with his songs, I came across Leslie Wood and the Princess Zévorine again, alone in front of the deserted buffet.

The Princess was speaking with almost vehement enthusiasm of Count Tolstoi, whose friend she was. She described this great man who had descended to the lowliest life, donning the dress, and with it the spirit of the moujik, and using his hands which had indited literary masterpieces in the manufacture of shoes for the poor.

To my great surprise, Wood was expressing approbation of a kind of life so completely opposed to common sense. In his slightly panting voice, to which the beginnings of asthma had given a singular sweetness, he said—

"Yes, Tolstoi is right. The whole of philosophy is contained in that phrase: 'May the will of God be done!' He has realized that all the woes of humanity are the outcome of the exercise of human

will as distinct from the will divine. My only fear is that he may impair so noble a doctrine by fantastic and extravagant additions."

"Oh!" returned the Princess in a subdued voice, and hesitating a little, "the Count's teaching is only extravagant upon one point; that is, in inculcating the extension of the rights and duties of husbands to an extremely advanced period of their lives, and imposing on the saints of these latter days the fruitful old age of the patriarchs."

Wood, himself elderly, replied with a restrained exaltation—

"And that again is excellent, very saintly even. Physical and natural love is becoming to all God's creatures, and so long as it does not involve either dissension or restlessness, it maintains that divine simplicity, that saintly fleshliness without which there is no salvation. Asceticism is nothing but pride and rebellion. We must always bear in mind the example of that holy man Boaz, and let us remember that the Bible calls love the bread of old age."

Then, all of a sudden, transported, illuminated, transfigured, ecstatic, and invoking with eyes and arms and his whole soul some invisible presence, he murmured—

"Annie! Annie! Annie, my best beloved, it is

true, is it not, that our Lord desires his saints, whilst they are men and women, to love one another humbly, even as the beasts of the field?"

Upon this he fell exhausted into an arm-chair. A terrific inhalation shook his broad chest, and in this condition his appearance was fuller of vitality than ever, like those machines that appear more formidable when they are out of gear. The Princess Zévorine, without any show of astonishment, wiped his forehead with her handkerchief and gave him a glass of water, which he drank.

For my part I was dumfounded. In this clairvoyant I was unable to recognize the man who in his study, littered with blue-books, had so many times conversed with me with the utmost clear-headedness upon Oriental affairs, the Treaty of Frankfort, and critical situations on the money market. As I allowed the Princess to observe my uneasiness, she said, with a shrug of the shoulders—

"It is easy to see you are French! You look upon every one as a madman who does not think exactly what you think yourself. You need not be uneasy; our friend Mr. Wood is level-headed enough, perfectly level-headed. Let us go and listen to G——."

When I had conducted the Princess to the principal *salon,* I prepared to leave. In the ante-

chamber I found Wood putting on his overcoat. He did not appear to feel any ill effects from his attack.

"My dear fellow," he said, "I think we are neighbours. I suppose you are still living on the Quai Malaquais, and I have taken up my quarters in a hotel in the Rue des Saints Péres. In dry weather like this it is a pleasure to go on foot. If you are willing we will stroll along together and chat."

I agreed readily. On the doorstep he offered me a cigar, and held out a pocket electric torch for me to light it by.

"I find it very convenient," he said, and proceeded to explain the principle of it very lucidly.

I recognized the Wood of old times again. We moved on perhaps a hundred paces along the street chatting on indifferent subjects. Then suddenly my companion put his hand quietly on my shoulder.

"My dear friend," he began, "some of the things I said this evening cannot have failed to surprise you. You would probably like me to explain them."

"I was intensely interested, my dear Wood, pray do."

"I will do so willingly. I have the greatest admiration of your character. We may not regard

life from the same point of view. But you are not one of those who repel an idea because it is new, and that is a disposition sufficiently rare, in France especially."

"I fancy, however, my dear Wood, that for liberty of thought——"

"Oh! no, you are not, like the English, a race of theologians. But enough of that. I want to tell you in as few words as possible the history of my convictions. When you knew me fifteen years ago I was the correspondent of the London *World*. With us journalism is a more lucrative profession, and is held in higher esteem than with you. My appointment was a good one, and I fancy I reaped the greatest possible advantages from it. I am familiar with business transactions, and I carried through some very profitable ones, and in a few years I achieved two very desirable things: influence and fortune. You are aware that I am a practical man.

"I have never worked without a goal in view. And, above all things, I aimed at attaining the supreme goal of life. Fairly exhaustive theological studies undertaken in my youth had convinced me that that goal lay outside the sphere of this terrestrial life. But I was yet in doubt as to the practical means of attaining it. As a result, I suffered cruelly.

Uncertainty is absolutely insupportable to a man of my temperament.

"In this state of mind I turned my attention seriously to the psychical researches of Sir William Crookes, one of the most distinguished members of our Royal Society. I knew him personally, and needed no assurance that he was both a man of learning and a gentleman. He was at that time giving his attention to the case of a young woman endowed with psychic powers of an altogether uncommon nature, and, like Saul of old, he was fortunate enough to evoke the presence of an indisputable disembodied spirit.

"A charming woman, who had passed through the experience of earthly life and was now living the life beyond the tomb, lent herself to the experiments of the eminent spiritualist, and submitted to every test he could exact from her within the limits of decorum. I considered that investigations such as this, bearing on the point at which terrestrial existence borders on extra-terrestrial existence, would lead me, if I followed them step by step, to the discovery of that which it is above all necessary to know, that is to say, the true aim of life. But it was not long before I was disappointed in my hopes. The researches of my respected friend, although conducted with a precision which left nothing to be desired, did not result

in a theological and moral conviction sufficiently unequivocal.

"Moreover, Sir William was suddenly deprived of the co-operation of the incomparable dead lady who had so graciously attended several of his spiritualistic séances.

"Discouraged by the incredulity of the public, and irritated by the sallies of his colleagues, he ceased to give any information relative to his psychic experiences. I communicated my discomfiture to the Reverend Mr. B——, with whom I had been on friendly terms from the time of his return from South Africa, where he had laboured as an evangelist in a devoted and systematic fashion truly worthy of old England.

"Mr. B—— is, of all men, the one who has at all times exercised the most powerful and decisive influence over me."

"He is very intellectual, then?" I asked.

"His knowledge of doctrine is profound," replied Wood. "But better than all else he has a strong character, and you are aware, my dear fellow, that it is by force of character that men are swayed. My mischances occasioned no surprise to him; he attributed them to my lack of method, and, above all, to the pitiable moral infirmity I had shown on this occasion.

" 'Scientific experiments,' he declared, 'can never lead to discoveries in any other domain than that of science. How is it you did not understand this? Leslie Wood, you have been strangely heedless and frivolous. The Apostle Paul has told us that the Spirit searcheth all things. If we would discover spiritual truths we must set our feet on the spiritual path.'

"These words produced a profound impression on me.

" 'How then,' I asked, 'shall I enter on the spiritual path?'

" 'Poverty and simplicity must be your guides!' Mr. B—— replied. 'Sell your goods and give the purchase money to the poor. You are renowned. Conceal yourself. Pray, and devote yourself to works of charity. Put on a spirit of simplicity and a pure soul and you will attain truth.'

"I resolved to follow out these precepts to the letter. I sent in my resignation as correspondent to the *World*. I realized my investments, which were in great part in commercial enterprises, and, fearing to repeat the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, I conducted this delicate operation in such a way as not to risk the loss of a penny of the capital which was no longer my own. Baron Moïse, who kept an eye on my negotiations, conceived an almost religious rev-

erence for my financial genius. By direction of Mr. B——, I handed over to the treasurer of the *Evangelical Society* the sums I had realized, and when I expressed to that eminent theologian my delight at being poor—

" 'Have a care,' said he, 'that in your poverty you do not indulge in exaltation at your prowess. It will serve you but ill to strip yourself outwardly if within your own breast you cherish a golden idol. Be humble!' "

Leslie Wood had reached this point in his narrative when we arrived at the Pont Royal. The Seine, upon whose surface the lights threw flickering reflections, flowed beneath the arches with a dull moan.

"I shall have to cut my story short," Wood began once more. "Each episode of my new life would occupy a whole night to recount. Mr. B——, to whom I was as obedient as a child, sent me to the Basutos, commissioned to fight against the slave trade. There I lived under a tent alone with that hardy bedfellow whose name is danger, and through fever and drought became aware of the presence of God.

"At the end of five years Mr. B—— recalled me to England. On the steamer I met a young girl. What a haunting face she had! She was a vision a thousand times more radiant than the phantom

presence which appeared to Sir William Crookes!

"She was the orphan daughter of a colonel in the Indian army and she was poor. She had no particular beauty of features. Her pale complexion and emaciated face indicated suffering; but her eyes expressed all that one can imagine of heaven; her body seemed to glow gently with an inward light. How I loved her! At sight of her I fathomed the hidden meaning of all creation! That simple young girl with one glance revealed to me the secret of the harmony of the spheres!

"Ah! she was simple, very simple, my monitress, my well-loved lady, sweet Annie Fraser! In her translucent soul I could read the sympathy she felt for me. One night, one serene night, when we were alone together on the deck of the ship in the presence of the seraphic company of the stars, which throbbed in chorus in the sky, I took her hand and said—

"'Annie Fraser, I love you. I believe that it would be good for us both for you to become my wife, but I am debarred from planning my own future in order that God may dispose of it as He sees fit. May it be His will to unite us! I have surrendered my own will into the hands of Mr. B——. When we reach England we will go together in search of him; will you, Annie Fraser? And if he gives his sanction we will marry.'

"She gave her consent. For the remainder of the voyage we read the Bible together.

"Immediately on our arrival in London I accompanied my fellow passenger to Mr. B——'s, and told him what the love of this young girl meant to me, and with what clear insight it inspired me.

"Mr. B—— gazed for a long time on her with kindliness.

" 'You may marry,' he said at length. 'The Apostle Paul has declared that the husband is sanctified by the wife, and the wife by the husband. But let your union resemble those held in honour amongst Christians in the primitive Church! Let it remain purely spiritual, and see that the angel's sword lies between you in your bed. Go, now, and remain humble and secluded, and let not the world hear your name.'

"I married Annie Fraser, and I need scarcely tell you that we complied rigidly with the condition imposed on us by Mr. B——. For four years I delighted in that brotherly and sisterly union.

"By grace of simple little Annie Fraser I advanced in the knowledge of God. There was nothing now that could cause us suffering.

"Annie was ill, and her strength declined, and we repeated joyfully in union, 'May the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven!'

"After four years of this life together, there came a day, a Christmas day, when Mr. B—— summoned me to him.

" 'Leslie Wood,' he said, 'I have put you to the proof for your soul's sake. But it would be to fall into papistical error to believe that the union of His creatures after the flesh is displeasing to God. Twice He blessed both animals and mankind in pairs, in the earthly Paradise, and in the ark of Noah. Go, and live henceforth with your wife, Annie Fraser, as a husband with his wife.'

"When I arrived home, Annie, my well-loved Annie, was dead. . . .

"I own my weakness. It was with my lips and not with my heart that I pronounced the words, 'O God, Thy will be done!' and thinking upon Mr. B——'s tardy removal of the restrictions upon our love, I felt my mouth full of bitterness, and as it were ashes in my heart.

"So it was with a forlorn soul that I knelt down at the foot of the bed where, beneath a cross of roses, silent and white and with the faint violets of death on her cheeks, my Annie slept her last sleep.

"O thou of little faith! thou didst bid her adieu and remain a whole week plunged in barren sorrow that approached despair. How much rather

shouldst thou, on the contrary, have rejoiced, both in body and soul! . . .

"On the night of the eighth day, as I was weeping, my forehead bowed upon the cold and empty bed, I had a sudden conviction that the beloved was near me in my chamber.

"Nor was I deceived. When I raised my head I saw Annie, smiling and radiant, holding out her arms to me. But how find words for what remains to tell? How express the ineffable? And is it permissible to reveal such mysteries of love?

"Clearly when Mr. B—— said to me 'Live with Annie as a husband with his wife!' he knew that love is stronger than death.

"Learn, then, my friend, that from that hour of forgiveness and joy my Annie has returned nightly to my side distilling celestial odours."

He spoke with appalling exaltation.

We had slackened our pace. He stopped in front of a hotel of Moorish exterior.

"This is where I live," he said. "Do you see that window on the second floor with the light in it? She is waiting for me."

He left me abruptly.

Eight days later I learned from the newspapers of the sudden death of Leslie Wood, former correspondent of the *World*.

GESTAS

TO CHARLES MAURRAS

GESTAS

"'Gestas,' dixt li Signor, 'entrez en Paradis.'"
"Gestas, dans nos anciens mystères, c'est le nom du larron crucifié à la droite de Jésus-Christ" (AugustinThierry, *la Rédemption de Larmor*).[1]

OLKS say that we have amongst us at this very day a sad rogue named Gestas, who writes the sweetest songs in the world. It was written on his flat-featured face that he would be a sinner after the flesh, and towards evening evil exultation shines in his green eyes. He is no longer young. The protuberances on his skull have taken on the lustre of copper; the long hair falling about his neck has taken a greenish tinge. Nevertheless he is ingenuous, and has kept fast hold on the naive faith of his childhood. When he is not in hospital he occupies a little room in some squalid hotel between the Panthéon and the Jardin des Plantes. There, in the old impoverished quarter, every stone is familiar with his tread, the gloomy byways are

[1] "'Gestas,' said the Lord, 'enter into Paradise.'"
"Gestas, in our ancient mystery plays, was the name of the thief who was crucified on the right hand of Jesus Christ" (Augustin Thierry, *The Redemption of Larmor*).

tolerant of him, and one of these narrow lanes is entirely after his own heart; for, lined though it is with dram shops and boosing kens, it boasts on the corner of one of the houses an image of the Virgin in a blue niche behind bars. Of an evening he progresses from café to café, and at station after station, with pious orderliness, he takes his beer or his spirits: the exacting duties of the devotee of debauchery call for method and regularity. The night is far gone when, without knowing how, he once more reaches his den, and by a daily miracle discovers the sacking bed, upon which he falls fully dressed. There with clenched fists he sleeps the sleep of the vagabond and the child. But that sleep is brief.

As soon as dawn casts its pale radiance upon the window, and between the curtains darts its luminous shafts into the attic, Gestas opens his eyes, rises, shakes himself like an ownerless dog awakened by a kick, hurries down the long, spiral staircase, and once more sets his eyes delightedly on the street, the kind street which is so indulgent to the vices of the lowly and the poor. His eyelids wink at the clear light of the early morning; the nostrils, which recall Silenus, inhale the clean air. Vigorous and upright, one leg stiffened by rheumatism of long standing, he goes on his way leaning on his dog-wood stick, the

ferrule of which he has worn out with twenty years of wandering. But in his nocturnal adventures he has never lost either his pipe or his stick. And at the beginning of the day his appearance is that of a man perfectly simple and perfectly happy. Which is what he actually is. His greatest joy in life, which he buys at the sacrifice of sleep, is to go from bar to bar in the morning drinking white wine with the workmen. It is an innocent sort of tippling: the transparent wine, in the pale light of early morning, amongst the white blouses of the masons; there you have a symphony in whites which enchants this soul, of which vice has not yet subdued the candour.

Now one spring morning when he had sauntered in this fashion from his lodging as far as *The Little Moor,* Gestas had the satisfaction of seeing the door, over which appeared a Saracen's head in cast iron, gay with paint, thrown open as he came up, and so he reached the tin counter in the company of friends with whom he had no acquaintance: a gang of workmen from La Creuse, who clinked their glasses, talked of their own part of the country, and indulged in boasting after the manner of the twelve peers of Charlemagne. They drank a glass and cracked a crust; when one of them thought of a good thing he laughed very loudly at it, and so that his comrades might understand it the better gave them

a good thump or two on the back with his fist. The older men, however, dispatched their potations slowly and silently. When these had all departed to their work, Gestas, the last left, quitted *The Little Moor* and made his way to *The Juicy Quince,* with the lance-headed railings of which he was familiar. Here, again, in excellent company, he had a drink, and even offered a glass to two mistrustful but mild guardians of the peace. After this he visited a third bar, the ancient wrought-iron sign of which represents two little men staggering under an enormous bunch of grapes, and there he was served by the lovely Madame Trubert, famous all the quarter through for her prudence, her strength, and her jollity. Then as he neared the fortifications he had yet another drink at the distillery where, in the shadow, the gleaming copper taps of the barrels attract the eye; and still another at the general shop where the green shutters were still fast closed between the two boxes of laurels; after which he returned to the most populous districts and ordered *vermouth* and the brandy known as marc in various cafés. Eight o'clock struck. He walked very erect, with a steady, rigid, solemn gait; he was astonished when women, running to buy provisions, with bare head and their hair twisted in a knot low on the neck, ran against him with their heavy baskets, or

when he came into collision with some small girl grasping an enormous loaf in her arms. Still, at times, if he crossed the road the milkman's cart, with its clinking, rattling tin cans, would pull up so close to him that he could feel the horse's warm breath on his cheek. But he continued his way unhasting and careless of the imprecations of the rustic milk-vendor. His gait, secure of support from his dog-wood stick, was calm and haughty. But internally the old man was staggering. Nothing was left of his early morning gaiety. The lark, whose joyous trills had thrilled through him with his earliest sips of the pale-hued wine, had sped away at a single flight, and now his soul was a murky rookery, where crows croaked hoarsely upon inky trees. He was mortally sad. A great disgust of himself welled up in his heart. The voice of his repentance, his shame, cried out in him: "Hog, hog! What a hog you are!" And he marvelled at that clear, angry voice, that superb angel's voice, which spoke mysteriously within himself, repeating: "Hog! hog! What a hog you are!" A yearning desire for innocence and purity woke in him. He wept; great tears fell down on his goat-like beard. He wept over himself. Obedient to the words of his Master, who said, "Weep for yourselves and for your children, O daughters of Jerusalem," he shed the bitter dew

from his downcast eyes upon the body he had delivered up to the seven deadly sins, and upon the obscene fancies born of his drunkenness. The faith of his childhood revived in him, and spread out fresh vigorous tendrils. From his lips pathetic prayers flowed forth. He said under his breath: "O God, grant me to become once more even as the little child which once was I!" At the moment he offered up this simple petition he realized that he was standing under a church porch.

It was an old church, once white and comely beneath its lacework of stone, which time and the hand of man had marred. Now it had become as black as the Shulamite, and its beauty could only appeal to the hearts of poets; it was a church "little and poor and old," like the mother of François Villon, who perchance in her day came to kneel in its precincts, and saw on the walls, nowadays whitewashed, that painted paradise, the harps of which she believed she could hear, and that inferno where the damned suffered fiery torment, which caused the worthy soul to be much afraid. Gestas entered into the House of God. He saw no one within, not even any one to offer him holy water, not even a poor woman like the mother of François Villon. Ranged in seemly order in the nave, a congregation of chairs alone bore wit-

ness to the faith of the parishioners, and seemed to sustain public worship.

In the cool, moist shade afforded by the vaulting Gestas turned to his right towards the aisle where, close to the porch, before a statue of the Virgin, a pyramidal frame of iron displayed its pointed teeth, on which, however, not a single taper now burned. Then as he gazed on the image, white, pink, and blue in colour, smiling from the midst of little gold and silver hearts hung up as votive offerings, he bent his stiff old legs, wept tears like St. Peter, and sobbed out tender, disconnected words: "Holy Virgin, Mother, Mary, Mary, your child, your child, Mother!" But very speedily he rose up again, took several rapid steps, and stopped in front of a confessional. Framed of oak, darkened by the passage of time, oiled as are the beams of an olive press, this confessional had the irreproachable, homely, intimate appearance of an old linen cupboard. On its panels religious symbols carved in shell-like lozenges and rusticated work called up the memory of the townswomen of the olden time, who had come hither to bow their caps with lofty erections of lace and lave their housewifely souls in this type of the cleansing piscina. Where they had set their knees Gestas set his, and with lips close up to the wooden

grating called in a hushed voice: "Father! father!" As no one answered his call he knocked very gently with his finger on the wicket.

"Father! father!"

He wiped his eyes so as to see better through the holes in the grating, and thought he could make out through the dimness the white surplice of a priest.

He repeated—

"Father! father! pray listen to me. I am in need of confession, I must cleanse my soul; it is black and dirty; it disgusts me; it turns my stomach. Quick, father, the bath of repentance, the bath of pardon, the bath of Jesus. At the thought of my impurities my heart comes into my mouth, and I am ready to spew with disgust at my uncleanness. The bath, the bath of cleansing!"

Then he waited. Now fancying he perceived a hand, which made a sign to him from the depths of the confessional, now failing to discover in the alcove anything more than an empty seat, a long time passed. He remained motionless, his knees glued to the wooden step, his gaze intent on the wicket, whence he awaited the outpouring of pardon, peace, refreshment, health, innocence, reconciliation with God and himself, heavenly joy, submission to the divine love, the sovereign good. At intervals he murmured tender supplications—

"Monsieur le curé, father, monsieur le curé! I thirst! give me to drink, give me that which is yours to give, the water of innocence, a white robe, and wings for my poor soul. Give me penitence and pardon!"

Receiving no reply, he knocked still harder at the grating, and said aloud—

"Confession, I beg of you!"

At last he lost patience, and rising, showered heavy blows with his dog-wood stick on the walls of the confessional, shouting—

"Ho, there, monsieur le curé! Ho, there, monsieur le vicaire!"

And in proportion as he raised his voice he knocked more loudly. The blows fell furiously on the confessional, causing clouds of dust to arise from it, and only evoking in reply to his violence the vibration of its worm-eaten old planks.

The verger, who was sweeping out the sacristy, ran forward with his sleeves turned up on hearing the noise. When he saw the man with the stick he stopped short for a moment, and then advanced towards him with the cautious reserve common to the officials who have grown white in the service of this lowliest of police. Arrived within earshot he demanded—

"What is it you want?"

"I want to confess."

"Folks don't come to confess at an hour like this."

"I want to confess."

"Be off with you!"

"I want to see the curé."

"For what purpose?"

"To make my confession."

"The curé can't be seen just now."

"The senior vicaire, then."

"Nor he either. Now off you go."

"The second vicaire, the third vicaire, the fourth vicaire, the youngest vicaire."

"Be off with you."

"Ah, then! would you let me die unshriven? It's worse than it was in '93, it seems! . . . Any little vicaire. How will it hurt you if I make my confession to some little vicaire not any taller than my arm? Take word to some priest that he must come to hear my confession. I'll undertake to disclose to him a batch of sins rarer, more extraordinary, more interesting, you may take my word for it, than all those his chattering women penitents can trot out before him. You can tell him that he is wanted for a really fine confession."

"Get away now!"

"But won't you understand, you old Barabbas,

you? I tell you that I wish to reconcile myself with the good God—by God, I do!"

Although he did not rejoice in the majestic stature of the verger of a rich parish, this official staff-bearer was vigorous enough. He took our poor Gestas by the shoulders and hurled him outside the doors.

Gestas, once in the street, had only one idea in his brain, which was to get back into the church by one of the side doors, so as, if possible, to steal a march on the verger from behind, and perhaps lay hands on some underling vicaire who would consent to hear his confession.

Unhappily for the success of this manœuvre, the church was surrounded on all sides by old houses, and Gestas was soon hopelessly entangled, without hope of delivery, in an inextricable maze of streets, lanes, courts, and alleys.

Amongst them, however, he discovered a wine merchant's, and there the poor penitent tried to find consolation in absinthe. He managed to do so. But a fresh fit of repentance soon overtook him. And it is this which supports his friends in the hope that he will win salvation. He has faith—simple, firm, childlike faith. It is works alone which he is lacking in. Nevertheless there is no need to despair of him, since he himself never despairs.

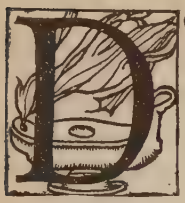
Without entering on the difficulties as to predestination—and they are not inconsiderable—nor weighing the opinions expressed on this subject by St. Augustine, Gottschalk, the Albigenses, the Wycliffites, the Hussites, Luther, Calvin, Jansenius, and the great Arnaud, one may venture to believe that Gestas is predestined to eternal felicity.

"Gestas," said the Lord, "enter into Paradise."

THE MANUSCRIPT OF A VILLAGE DOCTOR

TO MARCEL SCHWOB

THE MANUSCRIPT OF A VILLAGE DOCTOR



OCTOR H——, who recently died at Servigny (Aisne), where he had practised medicine for more than forty years, left behind him a journal never intended for the public eye. I should not feel justified in publishing the manuscript *in extenso,* nor even in printing fragments of any considerable length, although, like Monsieur Taine, there is a large number of persons nowadays of the opinion that it is above all things desirable to print and circulate what was never planned for publication. Whatever these worthy folk may say, the fact that a writer is an amateur does not afford any guarantee that what he has to say will be interesting. The memoirs of Doctor H—— would be wearisome from their mere monotonously moral note. And yet the man who wrote them, in his lowly environment, possessed an intellect quite out of the ordinary. This village doctor was philosopher as well as physician. Perhaps the closing pages of his journal might be perused with-

out any exceptional distaste. I venture to transcribe them here:—

Extract from the Journal of the late Doctor H——, Physician at Servigny (Aisne).

"It is an axiom of philosophy that nothing in this world is either altogether bad or altogether good. Pity, the tenderest, the most natural, the most useful of the virtues, is not at all times in place either with the soldier or the priest; both with priest and soldier there are occasions when it must be held in restraint—when confronted by the enemy, for instance. Officers do not make a practice of recommending it on the eve of battle, and in some old book I have read that Monsieur Nicole held it in distrust as the motive principle of concupiscence. There is nothing of the priest about me, and still less of the soldier. I am a doctor, and amongst the most insignificant of that profession, a country doctor. I have practised my art for long years and in obscurity, and I would assert that if pity alone can be a worthy stimulus to the adoption of our profession, we must lay it aside finally when we encounter those miseries which it has inspired us with the desire to alleviate. A doctor whom pity accompanies to the bedside of his patients will find his observation not sufficiently

acute, his hands not sufficiently steady. We go wherever comparison for the human race calls, but we must leave pity behind us. Moreover, doctors for the most part find it an easy task to attain the callousness which is so necessary to them. That is a mental condition which cannot long elude them, and there are moral reasons for this. Pity speedily becomes blunted when brought into contact with suffering; there is less disposition to deplore those misfortunes for which alleviation can be procured; finally, to the physician an illness offers a succession of interesting phenomena.

"From the time when I began the practice of medicine I flung myself into it with ardour. In the bodily ills disclosed to me I saw only opportunities for the practical application of my art. When a complaint developed without complications, I was able to see beauty in its conformity to the normal type. Those phenomena of disease, which offered apparent anomalies, awakened curiosity in my mind; so that I was enamoured of disease. What am I saying? From the point of view I espoused disease and health were possessed of indisputable personality. As an enthusiastic observer of the human mechanism, I found as much to admire in its more baleful affections as in its most healthy compliance with law. Willingly

should I have exclaimed with Pinel: 'What a magnificent cancer!' That was a fine attitude of mind, and I was on my way to become a philosopher-physician. I only needed to have a genius for my art in order to enjoy completely, and enter into possession of, the full beauty of the theory of disease classification. It is the privilege of genius to unveil the splendour of things. Where the ordinary man would see only a disgusting wound, the naturalist worthy of the name stands enraptured before a battlefield on which the mysterious forces of life struggle for supremacy, in an encounter more inexorable, more terrifying than any that the strenuous abandon of Salvator Rosa ever depicted. I only caught glimpses of that spectacle of which the Magendies and Claude Bernards were familiar witnesses, and it was a distinction for me to do so; but though resigned to the career of a humble practitioner, I fortified myself, as a professional duty, in the habit of confronting grievous situations unemotionally. I gave my patients my energies and my intellect. I did not give them pity. God forbid that I should place any gift, howsoever precious, above His gift of pity! Pity is the widow's mite; it is the incomparable offering of the poor man, who with generosity outstripping that of all the wealthy in this world of ours, gives with the

gift of his tears a piece torn from his heart. For that very reason it is that pity must be dissociated from the carrying out of a professional duty, how noble soe'er that profession may be.

"To enter upon more particular considerations, I would say that the folk in whose midst I am living evoke in their misfortunes a sentiment which is not pity. There is something of truth in the theory that a man cannot inspire in another an emotion which he is incapable of experiencing himself. Now the peasantry in our part of the country are not tender-hearted. Harsh to others as to themselves, they drag out an existence morose in its gravity. That gravity, too, is contagious, and in their company sadness and dejection affect one's mind. What is fine about their moral outlook is that they preserve unscathed the nobler features of humanity. As they are not accustomed to think with any frequency or profundity, their thoughts assume naturally in certain circumstances a solemn tone. I have heard some of them give utterance at the point of death to brief, forcible speeches worthy of the patriarchs of the Old Testament. They can call forth one's admiration, but do not awaken one's sympathies. With them everything is quite simple, even their illnesses. Their sufferings are not accentuated by their imagination. They are not like those over-

sensitive creatures who construct from their ills a monster more harassing than the ills themselves. They meet death so much as a matter of course that it is impossible to be greatly disturbed. To sum up, I might say that they are all so much alike that no shred of individuality vanishes as each one passes away.

"For the reasons which I have just set down it follows that I practise my profession of village doctor very peacefully. I never regret having chosen it. I sometimes think I am a little above it; but if it is vexatious to a man to feel himself above his position, the annoyance would certainly be greater if he felt unequal to it. I am not rich, and never shall be so long as I live. But of what use would money be to one who leads a solitary village life? My little grey mare, Jenny, is as yet only fifteen years old, and she still trots as easily as in the days of her first youth, especially when we are going in the direction of the stable. I do not, like my illustrious fellow-physicians in Paris, possess a gallery of pictures for the entertainment of my visitors, but I can show pear trees which the townsmen have nothing like. My orchard is famous for twenty leagues round, and the owners of the neighbouring châteaux come to beg cuttings from me.

"Now on a certain Monday—it will be a year ago

this very day—as I was busy in my garden inspecting my espaliers, a farm servant came to beg me to call as soon as possible at Les Alies.

"I asked him whether Jean Blin, the farmer at Les Alies, had sustained a fall the previous day as he came home in the evening. For in my part of the country a sprain is a common Sunday occurrence, and it is not at all rare for a man to break two or three ribs that day on leaving the public-house. Jean Blin is not exactly a bad sort, but he likes drinking in company, and more than once he has known what it is like to wait for Monday's dawn at the bottom of a miry ditch.

"The farm servant replied that there was nothing the matter with Jean Blin, but that Éloi, Jean's little son, was seized with fever.

"Without another thought for my espaliers, I went in search of my hat and stick, and set out on foot for Les Alies, which is only twenty minutes' walk from my house. As I walked, my thoughts were on ahead with Jean Blin's little boy in the grip of a fever. His father was a peasant much like every other peasant, with this peculiar difference, that the Intelligence which created him forgot to provide him with a brain. This great hulking Jean Blin has a head as thick as his fist. Divine wisdom has only furnished that particular skull

with what was strictly indispensable, there's no getting over that. His wife, the best looking woman in the place, is a noisy, bustling housewife, stolidly virtuous. Well, well! To this worthy couple a child had been given, who was easily the most delicate, the most spiritual little being that ever adorned this old world of ours. Heredity is responsible for some of the surprises in nature, and it has been well said that nobody knows what he is about when he fathers a child. Heredity, according to our honoured Nysten, is the biological phenomenon which is responsible for the fact that, in addition to the normal type of the species, ancestors transmit to their descendants certain peculiarities of organization and of aptitude. I admit it. But what peculiarities are transmitted and what are not, that is what is not very clear, even after a perusal of the learned works of Doctor Lucas and Monsieur Ribot. My neighbour, the notary, lent me last year a volume by Monsieur Émile Zola, and I observe that that author takes credit for particular discernment in this respect. 'Here,' he says, in substance, 'is an ancestor afflicted with neurosis; his descendants will show neuropathic tendencies, that is to say, when they do not do so; amongst them will be found some foolish and some intelligent individuals; one of them may even be a genius.' He has

gone to the trouble of drawing up a genealogical chart to make his idea more easily apprehended. Well and good! The discovery is not particularly novel, and its expounder would unquestionably be ill-advised to vaunt himself upon it; it is none the less true, however, that it embraces practically all we know on the subject of heredity. And this is how it came about that Éloi, Jean Blin's little son, was an embodied intellect. He had a creative imagination. Many a time, when he was no higher than my walking-stick, I have come across him playing truant with the village urchins. Whilst they were reaching after nests, I have watched the little fellow constructing model mills and miniature syphons with pipes of straw. Inventive and unsociable he turned to nature. His schoolmaster despaired of ever making anything of so inattentive a child; and, to tell the truth, at eight years old Éloi was still ignorant of his letters. But at that age he learned to read and write with astonishing rapidity, and in six months became the best scholar in the village.

"He was the most affectionate and the most clinging child. I gave him a few lessons in mathematics, and was astounded at the fertility that his mind displayed at this early age. In fact—I own it without any fear of being ridiculed, for in an

old man cut off from civilization some exaggeration is pardonable—I rejoiced to have detected in this little peasant the premonitions of one of those enlightened spirits which at long intervals shine forth in the midst of our purblind race, and, impelled alike by the need of lavishing their affection and the desire for knowledge, are bound to effect something useful or beautiful wherever fate may assign them a place.

"My mind was occupied with musings of this kind as far as Les Alies. Entering the low-ceiled roof, I found little Éloi ensconced in the big bed with cotton hangings, to which no doubt his parents had removed him on account of the gravity of his condition. He was lethargic, his head, though small and delicate, nevertheless made as great a dent in the pillow as if it had been of enormous weight. I stole near. His forehead was on fire; there was a disquieting redness about the conjunctive membrane; the temperature of the body was altogether too high. His mother and grandmother kept close to him, anxiously. Jean Blin, whose uneasiness prevented him from working, not knowing what to do, and being afraid to go away, stood with his hands in his pockets looking inquiringly first at one and then at another. The child turned his drawn face towards me, and scrutinizing me

with an affectionate but heartbreaking glance, said in reply to my questions that his forehead and his eyes were both very painful, that he could hear noises which he knew were imaginary, and that he knew perfectly well who I was, his dear old friend.

" 'First he has shivering fits, and then he is feverishly hot,' said his mother.

"Jean Blin, after ruminating for several minutes, remarked—

" 'My belief is that what ails him is his inside.'

"Then he relapsed into silence.

"It had been only too easy for me to diagnose the symptoms of acute meningitis. I prescribed revulsive applications to the feet, and leeches behind the ears. I drew near to my little friend a second time, and tried to say something cheerful to him, more cheerful, alas! than facts warranted. But I was suddenly aware of an entirely new personal experience. Although I was completely self possessed I seemed to see the sick child through a veil, and at such a distance that he appeared quite, quite small. This upsetting of my ideas of space was speedily followed by an analogous upheaval of my ideas of time. Although my visit had not lasted above five minutes, I received the impression that I had been in that low-ceiled room, in front of that bed with its white cotton hangings, for a long time,

for a very long time, and that months and even years had rolled by whilst I was held motionless.

"By a mental effort which is perfectly natural to me, I there and then put these singular impressions under analysis, and the cause of them became quite clear to me. It was simple enough. Éloi was dear to me. At the sight of him so unexpectedly and so seriously ill I could not 'get my bearings.' It is the popular phrase and it is appropriate. Moments of anguish appear to us unnaturally long. That is why I received the impression that the five or six minutes I had passed beside Éloi had something interminable about them. As to the fancy that the child was at a great distance from me, that came from the idea that I was about to lose him. This idea, impressed on me against my will, had from the first moment assumed a character of absolute certainty.

"The following day Éloi was in a less alarming condition. The improvement continued for several days. I had sent into the town to procure ice, and this had had a good effect. But on the fifth day I recognized that he was in violent delirium. He talked a good deal, and amongst the disconnected words I heard him pouring out I could distinguish these—

" 'The balloon! the balloon! I have hold of the

helm of the balloon. It rises. The sky is inky. Mamma, mamma! why won't you come with me? I am steering my balloon to a place where it will be so beautiful! Come, it is stifling here.'

"That day Jean Blin followed me up the road. He slouched along with that air of embarrassment a man has who wants to say something and is yet afraid to say it. At last, after walking some twenty paces with me in silence, he stopped, and laying his hand on my arm said—

" 'See here, Doctor, it's my belief that what ails the little chap is his inside.'

"I continued my way sorrowfully, and for the first time in my life my eagerness to see once more my pears and apricots did not avail to mend my pace. For the first time in forty years of practice I found the plight of one of my patients heart-rending, and in my innermost self I bewailed the child I was powerless to save.

"Distracting pangs soon came to magnify my grief. I feared that my treatment had contributed to the development of the disease. I caught myself forgetting in the morning what I had prescribed the night before, uncertain in my diagnosis, nervous, and worried. I called in one of my fellow-practitioners, a clever young fellow, who had a practice in the next village. When he arrived, the poor

little fellow, whose sight was already gone, was plunged in a profound coma.

"The following day he died.

"A year having elapsed after this misfortune, it happened that I was called in consultation to the county town. The fact is singular. The causes which led up to it are extraordinary; but as they have no connection with what I am relating, I do not record them here. After the consultation, Dr. C——, physician to the prefecture, did me the honour to invite me to lunch with him and two other members of the profession. After lunch, where I found refreshment in conversation at once erudite and diversified, coffee was served to us in the doctor's sanctum. As I approached the mantelpiece to put down my empty cup, I saw hanging upon the mirror-frame a portrait which aroused in me so profound an emotion that it was with difficulty I refrained from crying out. It was a miniature, the portrait of a child. This child resembled in so striking a fashion the one I had been unable to cure—the child of whom I had been constantly thinking for a year past—that for a moment I could not avoid the thought that it was he himself. That supposition, however, was of course absurd. The black wooden frame, with the circlet of gold surrounding the miniature, proclaimed the taste of the

end of the eighteenth century, and the child was depicted in a vest of pink and white striped material such as the little Louis XVII might have worn; but the face was out-and-out the face of my little Éloi. The same forehead, imperious and powerful —the forehead of a man beneath the curls of a cherub; the same fire in the eyes, the same suffering grace on the lips! Indeed, to the very same features was joined the identical expression!

"I had probably been examining this portrait for quite a long while when Dr. C——, clapping me on the shoulder, said—

" 'Ah, my friend, you have before you a family relic which I am proud to possess. My maternal grandfather was the friend of the illustrious man whom you see painted there in the days of his early boyhood, and it was from my grandfather that that miniature came into my possession.'

"I asked him to be good enough to tell me the name of his grandfather's illustrious friend. Upon this he unhooked the miniature and held it out to me:

" 'See,' he said, 'on the exergue . . . *Lyon,* 1787. Doesn't that recall anything to you? No? Well, that child of twelve was the great Ampère.'

"Then, in a flash, I had an exact perception, an unequivocal estimate of what death had swept away one year previously in the farmhouse of Les Alies."

MEMOIRS OF A VOLUNTEER

TO PAUL ARENE

MEMOIRS OF A VOLUNTEER[1]

I

WAS born in seventeen hundred and seventy in the rural outskirts of a small town in the Langres district, where my father, half townsman and half peasant, dealt in cutlery and tended his orchards. In this place certain nuns, although they only educated girls, consented to teach me to read since I was but a child, and they were good friends of my mother. On leaving their hands I took lessons in Latin from a priest in the town, a shoemaker's son, well grounded in the humanities. In the summer the shade of some old chestnut-trees served as a schoolroom, and close beside his hives the Abbé Lamadou interpreted Virgil's *Georgics* to me. I never dreamed that anyone could be happier than I, and between my master and Mlle. Rose, the farrier's daughter, I lived in great contentment. But in this world no happi-

[1] All the incidents in these memoirs are authentic, and may be traced to various documents of the eighteenth century. Not a single detail, however apparently insignificant, is made use of for which indubitable authority cannot be produced. (AUTHOR.)

ness is enduring. One morning, as my mother embraced me, she slipped an écu of six livres into my coat pocket. My luggage was packed. My father leaped on his horse and, taking me up behind him, carried me off to the college at Langres. All the time the journey lasted I was dreaming of my own little room, scented towards autumn time with the perfume of the fruit stored up in the loft; or of the close where my father took me on Sunday to gather apples from the trees he had grafted with his own hand; of Rose, of my sisters, of my mother; even of myself, unhappy exile! I could feel my heart thump, and it was with difficulty that I held back the tears which filled my eyelids. At length, after five hours' journey, we reached the town and set foot to ground in front of a huge door, on which I read with a shudder the word *College*. The principal, Father Féval, of the Oratory, received us in a big saloon with white washed walls. He was still a young man, of impressive appearance, and I found his smile reassuring. On all such occasions my father had displayed a naturalness, vivacity, and candour which never deserted him.

"Reverend Father," he said, placing his hand on me, "I bring you here my only son. His name is Pierre, after his godfather, and Aubier, his father's

name, which I have handed on to him as stainless as I received it from my late dear father. Pierre is my only boy; his mother, Madeleine Ordalu, having presented me with one son and three daughters, whom I am bringing up to the best of my ability. To my daughters will fall the lot which it shall please God in the first place, and later on their husbands, to assign to them. They are said to be pretty, and I can't help believing it myself. But beauty is only a gay deceiver which it is best not to take into account. They will be handsome enough if they are only good enough. As to my son Pierre here before you (as he pronounced these words my father put his hand so heavily on my shoulder that he made me flinch), provided that he fears God and knows enough Latin, he is to be a priest. Very humbly then, reverend father, I beg you to examine him at your leisure, so as to ascertain his genuine capacities. If you find any merit in him, let him remain with you. I will willingly pay whatever is needful. If, on the contrary, you consider that you can make nothing of him, send me word, and I will come and fetch him away at once, and teach him how to make knives like his father. For I am a cutler, at your service, reverend sir."

Father Féval agreed to undertake what was asked of him. And upon this assurance, my father

took leave of the principal and of me also. As he was very moved, and had some trouble to restrain his sobs, he assumed a stiff and harsh expression, and under the semblance of a farewell embrace bestowed a terrific thump. When he was gone Father Féval drew me away from the parlour into a garden surrounded by a thick hedge. Then, as we passed beneath the shade of the trees, he said to me—

"O sĭlvai dulces umbras frondosaï!" [1]

I was fortunate enough to recognize in these archaic inflexions and ponderous prosody a line from old Ennius, and I replied glibly to Father Féval that Virgil was even more worthy than his antique predecessor to celebrate the beauty of these cool shades, *frigus opacum*. The principal seemed quite gratified at this compliment. He questioned me benevolently upon some rudimentary points, and when he had heard my replies—

"That will do," he said. "If you work hard, very hard indeed, you will be able to keep up with the fourth class. Come with me. I should like to introduce you myself to your master and your fellow-pupils."

Whilst our little walk lasted, my forlornness had

[1] O leafy woods diffusing grateful shade!

somewhat abated, and I was conscious of feeling supported in my distress. But no sooner did I find myself surrounded by my class-fellows and in the presence of Monsieur Joursanvault my master, than I sank back into abject despair. Monsieur Joursanvault was neither easy of access nor the possessor of the principal's fine simplicity. He appeared to me very much more impressed with his own importance and also more harsh and reserved. He was a little man with a big head, and his words found egress with a whistling noise between two white lips and four yellow teeth. I decided immediately that such a mouth as his was never intended to pronounce the name Lavinia, a name which I loved even better than that of Rose. For I may as well own it, the idyllic and royal fiancée of the unfortunate Turnus had been decked by my imagination with the most august charms. The ideal image I had formed of her sufficed to eclipse the more everyday beauty of the farrier's daughter. Monsieur Joursanvault then, the master of the fourth class, pleased me little enough. My class-fellows inspired me with fear: they had every appearance of being unspeakably venturesome, and it was not without reason that I dreaded that my simplicity might goad them to ridicule. I was very much inclined to cry.

Self-respect, a more powerful emotion than my grief, alone enabled me to restrain my tears.

When evening came, I left the college and went off into the town in search of the quarters which my father had bespoken for me. I was to lodge with five other scholars at the house of an artisan whose wife would do our cooking. Every month each of us paid him twenty-five sous.

At the outset my schoolfellows tried to tease me about my ill-cut clothes and my rustic appearance, but they gave up their efforts when they saw that they did not vex me. One of their number alone, the consumptive son of a lawyer, continued insolently to imitate my lumpish, awkward carriage, but I punished him with a fist so unexpectedly weighty that he was not disposed to resume his performance. Monsieur Joursanvault did not take very kindly to me, but as I fulfilled my tasks with regularity, I provided him with no occasion for punishment. As he displayed his authority in a violent, uncertain, and irritating fashion, he invited rebellion, and, as a matter of fact, there were several mutinous episodes in his class in which I, however, took no part. One day, as I was walking in the garden with the principal, who showed himself very kindly disposed to me, unluckily it

came into my head to boast to him of my good conduct.

"Father," said I, "I took no part in the last escapade."

"There's nothing to boast about in that," replied Father Féval, with a touch of contempt which rent my heart.

He hated meanness above everything in the world. I made up my mind as he spoke never again to say or do anything despicable. And if from that day forward I have managed to keep free from lying and mean-spiritedness, I owe it entirely to that excellent man.

Monsieur Féval was in no respect a philosopher-priest; he exercised the virtues, but not the doctrines, of Rousseau's Vicaire Savoyard. He believed everything a priest ought to believe. But he had a horror of mummery, and could not endure the idea of demanding the interposition of God in trifling affairs. This appeared clearly enough on the Christmas day when Monsieur Joursanvault came to him with a complaint against the impious jesters who, on the eve of the festival, had put ink in the holy water stoups.

The scandalized Joursanvault mumbled anathemas, and murmured—

"There is no disputing the fact, it is a black deed!"

"By reason of the ink," replied our good principal calmly.

That upright man regarded weakness as the direct source of all ills. He often said: "Lucifer and the rebellious angels erred through pride. It is on that account that even in hell they have not ceased to hold rank as princes and kings, and to maintain an awful supremacy over the souls of the damned. If they had fallen through pettiness, in the midst of the flames they would now be the laughing-stock and sport of sinners, and the empery of evil would have slipped from their dishonoured hands."

When the holidays came around it was a great joy to me to see my home once more. But I found it unaccountably shrunken. As I entered, my mother, bending over the hearth, was skimming the soup-kettle. She, too, my dear mother, seemed strangely diminutive to me, and I sobbed as I flung my arms round her.

With the skimmer in her hand she told me how age and trouble had rendered my father inactive, so that he was no longer able to look after his orchard; how my eldest sister was promised in mar-

riage to the cooper's son; how the sacristan of the parish had been found dead in his chamber, with a bottle in his hand, which his stark fingers clutched so firmly by the neck that it was thought at first that it could never be loosened from his hold. Yet it was scarcely decent to bear the sacristan's body to the church still grasping his bottle of wish-wash. As I listened to my mother a clear realization of the flight of time and the passing of things temporal for the first time reached my brain. I fell into a sort of reverie.

"Well, well, my boy," said my mother, "you look flourishing. Why, with your dimity jacket, you are already the very spit of a little *curé*."

At this moment Mademoiselle Rose came into the room, blushing and feigning to be completely surprised at the sight of me. I saw that she was interested in me, and I felt secretly flattered. But in her presence I assumed the grave and reserved demeanour of the ecclesiastic. The greater part of these holidays I spent in walks with Monsieur Lamadou.

It had been agreed between us that we should talk nothing but Latin. So we went our ways through the midst of the lowly tasks of the tillers of the soil, with nature riotous around us, side by

side, straight before us, grave, serious, guileless, disdainful of such utterly vain and common pleasures as we had knowledge of.

I returned to the college with the firm determination to take Holy Orders. Already I could see myself, like Monsieur Lamadou, wearing a great three-cornered hat and a cassock, with black breeches, woollen stockings, and buckled shoes, occupied now with the eloquence of Cicero, now with the doctrine of St. Augustine, and gravely acknowledging the salutes of the women and the poor folk who bowed to me as I threaded my way through the crowd. Alas! a woman's shadow began to disturb this peaceful dream. Up to that time I had known nothing of women, except Lavinia in the *Æneid* and Mademoiselle Rose. Then I realized Dido, and flames seemed to rush through my veins. The image of the unhappy Queen, who, tortured by an irremediable wound, wandered in the forest of myrtles, bent at night over my troubled couch.

Moreover if I walked out in the evening, I seemed to be aware of her dead white figure gliding between the bushes in the woods as the moon passes through the midst of the clouds. Obsessed by this dazzling image, I began to waver about taking Orders. Nevertheless, I assumed the dress

of the ecclesiastic, which suited me admirably. When I visited my home for the first time thus attired my mother curtsied to me, and Rose hid her face in her apron and wept. Then turning on me her lonely eyes, as pellucid as her tears, she said—

"I can't think what I am crying about, Monsieur Pierre!"

In this mood she was touching. But she did not in the least resemble the moon seen through the clouds. I did not love her; it was Dido I loved.

That year was signalized to me by a dreadful calamity. I lost my father, who sank very suddenly under an attack of water on the chest.

In his last moments he adjured his children to live honestly and piously, and blessed them. He died with a degree of resignation which was not in the least consonant with his character. It appeared to be without regret, with cheerfulness even, that he quitted a life to which he was strongly attached by all the bonds of a nature essentially vivacious. From him I learnt that it is easier to die than one would think, if one is but a good man.

I resolved that I, in my turn, would act a father's part to those elder sisters already marriageable, and to that tearful mother who, year by year, seemed to grow smaller, weaker, and more appealing.

Thus, then, in one moment, from a child I became a man. I finished my studies at the Oratory under excellent masters—Fathers Lance, Porriquet, and Marion, who had buried themselves in a wild and remote province to devote their brilliant faculties and a profound erudition which would have done honour to the Academy of Inscriptions to the education of a few poor children. The principal surpassed them all in loftiness of intellect and beauty of soul.

Whilst I was finishing my philosophical studies under those eminent teachers, a widespread rumour was conveyed to our distant province, and even penetrated the cloistral walls of the college. There was gossip about a convocation of the States General, and reforms were clamoured for, and great changes expected. Some of the new publications which our masters permitted us to read proclaimed the approaching return of the Golden Age.

When the moment came for me to leave the college, I wept as I embraced Father Féval.

He held me clasped in his arms with profound emotion. Then he led me to the hedge-sheltered path where six years previously I had had my first conversation with him.

There, taking me by the hand, he bent over me, and looked into my eyes and said—

"Remember, dear child, that without principle intellect goes for nothing. You will perhaps live long enough to see the dawn of a new régime in this land of ours. These great changes cannot be brought about without disturbances. May you bear in mind in the midst of them what I am telling you now: in difficult situations intellect is but a sorry shield: virtue alone can suffice to safeguard him who merits safety."

Whilst he discoursed in this vein we emerged from the arbour, and the sun, already low on the horizon, bathed him in its warm crimson rays and lit up his handsome, thoughtful countenance. I was fortunate enough to retain a vivid impression of his words, which struck me forcibly, although at the time they were a little above my head. At that date I was only a schoolboy, and not a very brilliant one. Since then my eyes have been opened to the profundity and truth of his maxims by the terrible object-lesson of subsequent events.

II

HAD abandoned the idea of taking Orders. It was necessary to earn a livelihood. I had not learnt Latin with the idea of making cutlery in the suburbs of a small town. I indulged in ambitious dreams. Our little holding, our cows, our garden, were far from equal to the fulfilment of my ambitions. I discovered rusticity in Mademoiselle Rose. My mother conceived that a town such as Paris was necessary to the full development of my abilities. Without much difficulty I myself came to a similar conclusion. I ordered a coat from the best tailor in Langres. With this coat went a steel-hilted sword, which threw back the skirts and invested one with so smart an air that I doubted nothing I was on the road to fortune. Father Féval gave me a letter of recommendation to the Duc de Puybonne, and on the 12th of July, in the year of grace 1789, I climbed into the coach, not without tears, laden with Latin books, cakes, bacon and kisses. I entered Paris by the Faubourg St. Antoine, which appeared to me more hideous

than the most squalid hamlets in my own province. With all my heart I bewailed both the unhappy folk who had their dwelling there and myself who had forsaken my father's house and orchard land to seek advancement amidst such a tatterdemalion crew. A wine merchant who had been my fellow-traveller explained, however, that these people were all in ecstasies over the destruction of an old prison known as the Bastille-St.-Antoine. He assured me that Monsieur Necker would soon bring back the Golden Age. But a wigmaker, who overheard our conversation, declared that, on the contrary, unless the King speedily dismissed him, Monsieur Necker would ruin the country.

"The Revolution," he added, "is a terrible misfortune. Nobody now dresses his hair. And people who neglect that duty are below the level of the beasts."

These words angered the wine merchant.

"Know, master barber," he interposed, "that a rejuvenescent race disdains idle trappings. I would punish you for your impertinence, if I had time to do so; but I am on my way to supply wine to Monsieur Bailly, the Mayor of Paris, who honours me with his friendship."

In this fashion they parted; and as for me, I betook myself on foot, with my Latin books, my bacon,

and the memory of my mother's kisses to the house of the Duc de Puybonne, to present my letter of recommendation. His mansion was situated at the other end of the city in the Rue de Grenelle. The passers-by vied with one another in supplying me with directions, for the Duke was celebrated for his benevolence.

He received me cordially. Everything in his dress and in his manners was of the utmost simplicity. He had that contented demeanour which one only meets with in men who labour assiduously without being compelled.

He read Father Féval's letter, and remarked—

"This is a satisfactory letter of recommendation, but what are your acquirements?"

I replied that I was acquainted with Latin, a little Greek, ancient history, rhetoric, and poetry.

"What a list of accomplishments!" he rejoined, smiling. "But it would have been more to the point if you had had some notion of agriculture, the mechanical arts, commerce, banking, and industry. You are acquainted with the laws of Solon, now, I'll wager?"

I signified that I was.

"Very good, very good. But you know nothing about the English constitution. But no matter. You are young, and of an age to acquire knowledge.

I will give you a place about my person, with an allowance of five hundred écus. Monsieur Mille, my secretary, will instruct you as to the duties I shall expect you to perform. Au revoir, monsieur."

A lackey conducted me to Monsieur Mille, who was writing at a table in the middle of a spacious white apartment. He signalled to me to wait. He was a little roundabout man, and his appearance was pleasant, but he rolled his eyes about ferociously, and seemed to be scolding under his breath as he wrote.

I heard him give utterance to the following words: "Tyrants, fetters, hell, man, Rome, slavery, liberty." [1] I concluded he was mad. But when he had laid his pen aside he nodded his head to me and smiled.

"Well?" he said. "You are examining the apartment. It is as severe as that of an ancient Roman. No gilding on the panels, no fal-lals on the mantelpiece; nothing is left to remind us of the detestable times of the late king, nothing remains that is derogatory to the dignity of a free man (*un homme libre*). *Libre, Tibre.* I must jot that rhyme down. It's a good one, now, isn't it? Are you fond of verse, Monsieur Pierre Aubier?"

I replied that I was only too much devoted to it,

[1] *"Tyrans, fers, enfers, homme, Rome, esclavage, liberté."* Monsieur Mille is, of course, engaged in a search for rhymes. (TRANS.)

and that it would have served me better when I presented myself before the Duke if I had preferred Mr. Burke to Virgil.

"Virgil is a great man," replied Monsieur Mille. "But what is your opinion of Monsieur Chénier? For my part I know nothing finer than his *Charles IX*. I will not attempt to conceal from you that I am myself experimenting in tragedy, and at the very moment you entered I was finishing a scene with which I am not a little pleased. You appear to me to be a very trustworthy person. I am quite willing to confide in you so far as to tell you what my tragedy is about, but you mustn't breathe a word. You realize how far-reaching the least indiscretion might be. I am composing a tragedy upon the subject of Lucretia."

Then taking up a large manuscript book he read out: *"Lucretia, a tragedy in five acts, dedicated to Louis the Well Beloved, the restorer of liberty to France."*

He spouted some two hundred lines to me and then broke off, saying in excuse that the remainder was as yet uncorrected.

"The Duke's post-bag," he said with a sigh, "robs me of the best hours of the day. We are in correspondence with all the enlightened men in England, Switzerland, and America. And talking

of this, I may tell you, Monsieur Aubier, that your employment will consist of copying and classifying letters. If you would like to be informed without delay as to the matters which are occupying our attention at this moment, I will tell you. At Puybonne we are superintending a fárm where certain English experts have been engaged to introduce into France such agricultural improvements as have been attained in Great Britain. We are importing from Spain a number of those silky-fleeced sheep the flocks of which have enriched Segovia with their wool. This is so arduous an undertaking that we have been compelled to enlist the co-operation of the King himself. Lastly, we are buying cows in Switzerland to present to our dependents.

"I can say nothing on the subject of our correspondence upon public affairs. Entire secrecy is preserved as to that. But you are, of course, aware that the efforts of the Duc de Puybonne are directed towards the introduction into France of the English constitutional system. Pardon my leaving you, Monsieur Aubier. I am due at the Comédie Française. *Alzire* is to be performed."

That night I slept in fine linen sheets, and I did not sleep well. I dreamed that my mother's bees were flying over the ruins of the Bastille and around

the Duc de Puybonne, who smiled graciously, and was enveloped in an unearthly radiance.

The following morning at an early hour I betook myself to Monsieur Mille's room, and asked him if he had enjoyed himself at the theatre. He replied that he ventured to believe that the performance of *Alzire* had given him a clue to some of the methods by which Monsieur de Voltaire stirred the emotions of his audience. Then he set me to work copying letters referring to the purchase of the Swiss cows, which the generous magnate was bestowing on his dependents. Whilst I occupied myself with this task, Monsieur Mille said to me—

"The Duke is kind-hearted. I have recorded his benevolent disposition in certain verses with which I am not ill-pleased. Are you acquainted with the Puybonne estate? No! It is a domain of enchantment. My lines may open your eyes to its charms. I will recite them to you—

Delightful valley, haven of repose,
Groves ever verdant, where the limpid stream
Peacefully onward flows,
Whose dulcet murmurings seem
Like note of birds, chanting their amorous woes;
How my heart thrills your rural charms to view,
And longings seize me, 'neath your sheltering boughs
Her cherished name i' the beech's bark to hew.

In this fair spot our Puybonne reigns,
And uprightness and charity
Silently bear him company,
His spirit our happiness sustains.
The frolic shepherds, at his call,
Under the elms together come,
Who to his bounty, one and all,
Owe flocks, and herds, and home." [1]

I was astounded. At Langres I had never heard anything so courtly, and I was impressed with the fact that the air of Paris contained a something inexpressible, which it was useless to seek elsewhere.

After dinner I set out to inspect the principal edifices of the town. The genius of art has spent two centuries in distributing his treasures on the glorious banks of the Seine. Hitherto I had only

[1] Vallon délicieux, asile du repos,
Bocages toujours verts, où l'onde la plus pure
Roule paisiblement ses flots,
Et vient mêler son doux murmure
Aux tendres concerts des oiseaux,
Que mon cœur est ému de vos beautés champêtres!
Que j'aime à confier, sous ces riants berceaux,
Le doux nom d'une nymphe à l'écorce des hêtres.
De ces beaux lieux Puybonne est possesseur;
Avec lui la bonté, la douce bienfaisance,
Dans ce palais habite en silence:
Le sentiment y retient le bonheur.
Puybonne enseigne aux folâtres bergères
A s'assembler sous les ormeaux,
Il se mêle parfois à leurs danses légères,
Puis il leur donne des troupeaux.

been acquainted with Gothic castles and churches, and their melancholy character, tinged with uncouthness, only awakens displeasing thoughts in the mind. Paris, it is true, still contains a certain number of these barbaric structures. The cathedral itself, which rises in that quarter of the town to which the term City is specially assigned, bears witness by the irregularity and confusion of its plan to the ignorance of the age in which it was erected. Parisians overlook its hideousness on the score of its antiquity. Father Féval was accustomed to say that everything antique is worthy of respect.

But what a different aspect do the buildings of the more cultured ages present! A regularity in plan, an exact proportion between the component parts, an uncrowded arrangement in the grouping, and then the charm of the various orders copied from the antique—all these qualities dazzle one in the creations of modern architects, and all unite to render the colonnade of the Louvre a masterpiece worthy of France and its kings. Ah, what a town is Paris! Monsieur Mille showed me the theatre where the finest actresses in the world ally their voices and their charms to the inspired compositions of Mozart and Gluck. And in addition, he even took me to the gardens of the Luxembourg, where beneath the shade of venerable trees I saw Raynal

walking side by side with Dussaulx. Ah, my honoured principal, my master, my father, my beloved Monsieur Féval! Would that you were witness to the joy, the rapture of your pupil, your son!

For six weeks I led the pleasantest of lives. All around me I heard talk of the return of the Golden Age, and I began to believe in the approach of the car bearing Saturn and Rhea within it. In the mornings, under Monsieur Mille's direction, I made copies of letters.

Monsieur Mille was a boon companion, always smiling, always uttering flowery speeches, always volatile as a zephyr.

After dinner I would read a few pages of the Encyclopædia to our worthy employer, and then I was free till the following morning. One night I went with Monsieur Mille to supper at the Porcherons. At the entrance of this place of amusement stood a group of women wearing the national colours in their caps, and carrying flowers in a basket. One of them, approaching me, took me by the arm and said, "See, little master, I make you a present of this bunch of roses."

I blushed, and was at a loss what to say in reply. But Monsieur Mille, who knew the ways of the town, said to me—

"You must give a six-sous piece in exchange for

those roses, and say something gallant to the pretty maiden."

I did both one and the other, and then inquired of Monsieur Mille if he thought the flower-seller was a well-conducted girl. He replied that there was very little likelihood of it, but that it was a duty to show courtesy to all women. Day by day I became more attached to the excellent Duc de Puybonne. He was the best and the most childlike of men. He did not consider that he had given anything whatever to the unfortunate unless it had cost him some self-sacrifice. He lived like a man of the people, and regarded the luxury of the rich as a preying upon the poor. His benefactions were well considered. One day, addressing us both, he said—

"No pleasure is more gratifying than to labour for the happiness of people unknown to you, whether by planting some useful tree, or by grafting on young saplings in the woods buds from which one day may spring fruit to assuage the thirst of some traveller astray."

The worthy Duke found no interests except in works of philanthropy. He laboured ardently to secure new constitutional forms to the kingdom. As a representative peer in the National Assembly he took his seat in the ranks of those admirers of English liberty who were styled monarchical, by

the side of Malouet and Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre. And although his party appeared even then defeated, he awaited with all the fervour of indomitable hope the oncoming of revolution in its most humane aspect. We shared his aspirations.

Despite numerous causes for uneasiness, we continued during the following year to be upheld by this enthusiasm. I accompanied Monsieur Mille to the Champ de Mars at the beginning of July. On this spot two hundred thousand persons of all ranks—men, women, children—were erecting with their own hands the altar upon which all were to swear that they would live free, or, if needs must, die free. Wig-makers in blue jackets, water-carriers, abbés, coal-heavers, capuchins, opera-singers in brocaded dresses with ribbons and feathers in their hair, all these side by side delved the sacred soil of their country. What an object-lesson in fraternity! We saw Monsieur Sieyès and Monsieur de Beauharnais trundling the same cart; we saw Father Gérard, passing like an ancient Roman from the Senate to the plough, wielding the spade and preparing the ground; we saw an entire family at work in the same spot—the father digging, the mother filling the wheelbarrow, and the children pushing it turn and turn about, whilst the youngest, only four years of age, borne in the arms of his

Grandfather aged ninety-three, lisped out: "*Ah! ça ira! ca ira!*" We saw the Society of Journeymen Gardeners marching in procession with lettuces and daisies attached to the ends of their spades. Several other corporations followed them, preceded by a band: the Printers, whose banner bore this inscription: *Printing, foremost ensign of Liberty.* Then the Butchers: upon their standard was painted a large knife, with these words: *Tremble, aristocrats! Behold the Journeymen Butchers.*

And even this took on the appearance for us of fraternity.

"Aubier, my friend, my brother," exclaimed Monsieur Mille, "I am fired with poetical enthusiasm. I am about to compose an ode which shall be dedicated to you. Listen:—

Friend, behold the concourse grand,
From far and wide assembled there,
The mainstays of our own loved land,
Whose banners proudly take the air:
Love it is directs their path
Toward the patriot altar-fires,
Each his bounden service hath
Vowed, till Life's last flame expires."[1]

[1] Ami, vois tu ce peuple immense,
Comme il accourt de toutes parts:
Des artisans chers à la France
Vois-tu flotter les étendards?

Monsieur Mille recited these lines heroically; he was little, but his gestures were magnificent. He was wearing an amaranth-coloured coat. These circumstances combined to draw attention to him, and by the time he had finished the foregoing he was surrounded by a ring of inquisitive people. He was applauded. In ecstasies, he went on—

"Unseal your eyes, direct your minds
Upon this solemn spectacle . . ." [1]

But scarcely had he uttered these words before a lady, decked with an immense black hat and feathers, flung herself into his arms and clasped him close against the fichu she wore round her shoulders.

"Ah, how splendid!" she cried. "Monsieur Mille, permit me to embrace you."

A Capuchin who occupied a place in the ring of onlookers, bent his chin down on to his spade and clapped his hands at the sight of such a capacious embrace. Then some of the young patriots who stood by pushed him laughingly in the direction of the demonstrative lady, who transferred her embraces to him in the midst of popular acclamations.

C'est à l'autel de la Patrie.
Que l'amour dirige leurs pas;
Tous vont à leur mère chérie
Se dévouer jusqu'au trépas.

[1] Ouvre tes yeux, fixe ton âme
Sur ce spectacle solennel . . .

Monsieur Mille embraced me, and I embraced Monsieur Mille.

"Such splendid lines!" cried the lady with the outrageous hat. "Bravo, Mille! They are worthy of Jean Baptiste."

"Oh!" said Monsieur Mille, bashfully hanging his head, his cheeks round and red as apples.

"Yes, absolutely worthy of Jean Baptiste," repeated Madame. "They must be set to the tune of *'Le serin qui te fait envie.'* "[1]

"You are too flattering," Monsieur Mille replied. "Permit me, Madame Berthemet, to present to you my friend Pierre Aubier, a Limousin gentleman. He is a man of parts, and will soon be accustomed to the ways of Paris."

"The dear creature," Madame Berthemet rejoined, as she pressed my hand. "Let him come to see us. You must bring him, Monsieur Mille. We have a little music always on Thursdays. Is he fond of music? But what a foolish question! Only a barbarian given over to every savage passion could fail to love music. Come this next Thursday, Monsieur Aubier; my daughter Amélie will sing you a ballad."

As she spoke, Madame Berthemet motioned to a young lady dressed in white, with a Greek head-

[1] The canary which spurs you to rivalry.

dress, whose fair hair and blue eyes seemed to me the loveliest in the world. I blushed as I bowed. But she did not appear to notice my embarrassment.

As we returned to the Puybonne mansion I did not attempt to conceal from Monsieur Mille the profound impression the beauty of this charming creature had made on me.

"In that case," replied Monsieur Mille, "I shall have to add a strophe to my ode.

And after reflecting for a few seconds, he added, "There now, I have managed it.

If some maiden, fair and fond,
To your wooing yields consent,
Only wedlock's sacred bond
Must your mutual vows cement.
But the altar where you hie
Must a patriot altar be,
Or the Heaven you dare defy
Will avenge your treachery." [1]

Alas! Monsieur Mille did not possess that gift of foretelling future events which was in former

[1] Si d'une belle honnête et sage
Tu sais un jour te faire aimer,
Le nœud sacré du mariage
Est le seul que tu dois former;
Mais à l'autel de la Patrie
Courez tous deux pour vous unir,
Que jamais votre foi trahie
N'ordonne au ciel de vous punir.

ages ascribed to poets. Our days of happiness were already numbered, and all our dazzling illusions were doomed to extinction. The day following the Federation fête the nation awakened to a sense of harrowing dissension. Weak and narrow-minded, the king ill fulfilled the limitless trust the people had placed in him.

The criminal emigration of princes and nobility was impoverishing the country, antagonizing the people, and conducing to war. The political clubs overawed the National Assembly. The acrimony of the populace became more and more menacing. And whilst the nation was a prey to agitators, neither did I possess my heart in peace. I had met Amélie again. I had become the constant guest of her family, and never a week passed that did not find me two or three times a visitor at the house they lived in, in the Rue Neuve St. Eustache. Their fortunes, at one time flourishing, had flagged considerably owing to the Revolution, and I may venture to say that ill-luck ripened our friendship. As Amélie became poorer I found myself more sympathetic, and I loved her. I loved without hope. Who was I, poor little peasant lad, that I should be pleasing to so charming a townswoman?

I marvelled at her gifts. By composing music, painting, or translating some English romance, she

courageously shut out the consciousness of misfortune, both public and private. Whenever she saw any one she displayed an aloofness which, so far as I was concerned, would relapse freely into playful banter. It was clear that though her heart was untouched she found my company diverting. Her father was the handsomest grenadier in the district, but in all other respects a nonentity. As to Madame Berthemet, she was, despite a petulant disposition, the best of women. She was brimming with enthusiasm. She appreciated parakeets, political economists, and Monsieur Mille's poetry to the swooning point. She was fond of me when she could spare time, but much of hers was taken up by the gazettes and the opera. Next to her daughter there was no one in the world whom it gave me greater pleasure to meet.

I had progressed greatly in the good graces of the Duc de Puybonne. I was no longer engaged in the copying of letters: he entrusted me with the most delicate transactions, and often confided to me matters as to which Monsieur Mille himself was left in ignorance.

Moreover, he had lost faith, if not courage. The humiliating flight of Louis XVI distressed him more than I can say; yet after the return from Varennes he appeared unintermittently in the en-

tourage of the royal prisoner, who had despised his advice and been suspicious of his loyalty. My dear master remained immutably faithful to moribund royalty. On the 10th of August he was at the Château, and it was by a sort of miracle that he eluded the mob and managed to get back to his house. During the night I was summoned to him I found him disguised in the clothes of one of his stewards.

"Farewell," he said to me. "I am leaving a country delivered over to all sorts of abominations and crimes. The day after to-morrow I shall have landed on the coast of England. I am taking with me three hundred louis; it is all I have been able to get together of what I own. I am leaving behind me property to a considerable amount. I have no one to trust my interests to but yourself. Mille is a fool. Take my affairs into your keeping. I know that you will incur danger in doing so; but I think highly enough of you to burden you with a compromising load."

I seized his hands, kissed them, and bathed them with tears; it was my only answer.

Whilst he escaped from Paris under cover of his disguise and a forged passport with which he was provided, I burned in the various fireplaces in the house papers which would have sufficed to com-

promise whole families, and cost the lives of hundreds of people. During the days that followed I was lucky enough to be able to dispose—at very poor prices, it is true—of the Duc de Puybonne's carriages, horses, and plate, and in this fashion I salvaged some seventy or eighty thousand livres, which crossed the Channel. It was not without encountering the greatest dangers that I carried these delicate negotiations through. My life hung in the balance. The Terror prevailed in the capital the day following the 10th of August. In those streets which only the previous evening were enlivened by the motley variety of costumes, where the cries of hawkers and the clatter of horses had resounded, solitude and silence now reigned. All the shops were closed; the citizens, concealed in their dwellings, trembled both for their friends and for themselves.

The barriers were guarded, and it was impossible for any one to leave the appalling city. Patrols of men armed with pikes paraded the streets. Domiciliary inspections were the only subject of conversation. In my chamber, high up in the roof of the mansion, I could hear the tramp of the armed citizens, the hammering of pikes and the butts of muskets against the neighbouring doors, and the wailing and screaming of the occupants, who were

dragged off to the sections. And after the *sans-culottes* had terrorized the peaceable dwellers in the neighbourhood throughout the day, they would assemble in the shop of my neighbour the grocer; there they would drink, dance the carmagnole, and shriek the *Ça ira* till morning dawned, so that it was impossible for me to close my eyes all night. My uneasiness increased the distress of insomnia. I could not but fear that some valet might have betrayed me, and that my arrest was already ordered.

Just then a fever of denunciation spread through the town. Never a scullion but believed himself a Brutus for the betrayal of the masters who had furnished him with a living.

I was continuously on the alert, and a faithful servant was ready to warn me at the first sound of the knocker. Fully dressed I would throw myself on my bed or into an arm-chair. I carried about with me the key of the small gate in the garden. But as those execrable September days dragged on, when I learned that hundreds of prisoners had been massacred without the least public protest, and under the approving eyes of the magistrates, horror at length got the better of fear in my mind, and I blushed to be taking such precautions for my safety, and defending with so much forethought an

existence which the crimes of my country should have rendered worthless.

No longer did I shrink from showing myself in the streets or encountering the patrols. Nevertheless, I clung to life. I possessed a powerful charm against my anguish and grief. One delightful vision banished from my sight the whole sombre panorama which unrolled itself before me. I loved Amélie, and her youthful countenance omnipresent to my imagination, held me spell-bound. I loved without hope. Nevertheless, I seemed to myself less unworthy of her now that I was acting like a man of courage. I dared, too, to fancy that the dangers to which I was exposed might render me more interesting to her.

In this frame of mind then I went to see her one morning. I found her alone. She talked to me with more benignity than she had ever before displayed. Her eyes were cast heavenwards, and tears fell from them. At the sight I was plunged in the most indescribable distress. I threw myself at her feet, seized her hand, and bathed it with tears.

"O, my brother!" she exclaimed, compelling me to rise. I had not realized up to that moment the bitter sweetness the name of brother can hold. I addressed her with my whole soul's tenderness.

"Yes," I cried, "the times are frightful. Mankind is steeped in wickedness. Let us away. Happiness is to be sought in solitude. There are still distant islands where it is possible to live in innocence and freedom from oppression. Let us depart. We will seek for happiness beneath the palms that cast their shade over the tomb of Virginia."

As I talked in this fashion she seemed to be in a dream, and her eyes had a far-away look; but I could not tell whether her dream and mine were one and the same.

III

I SPENT the rest of the day in the most harrowing suspense. I was powerless either to indulge in rest or to engage in any occupation. Solitude was repellent, and company uncongenial. In this mood I wandered haphazard along the streets and quays of the town, sorrowfully gazing at the mutilated armorial achievements on the fronts of the houses, and at the decapitated saints in the church porches. Thus preoccupied I found myself unconsciously in the garden of the Palais Royal, where a motley crowd of pedestrians had gathered to drink coffee and glance over the gazettes. The wooden galleries, by the way, had not ceased to present a festal appearance at all hours.

In consequence of the declaration of war and the progress of the allied armies, the Parisians had fallen into the habit of seeking for news at the Tuileries and the Palais Royal. In fine weather the crowd would be considerable, and anxiety even brought in its train a certain degree of distraction.

Many of the women, simply attired after the Greek fashion, wore the national colours, either at the waist or in the head-dress. I felt more lonely than ever in this crowd; all the noise, the movement which surrounded me, only served, so to say, to drive back and concentrate my thoughts upon myself.

"Alas!" I said to myself, "have I said enough? Have I shown my feelings unmistakably? Or rather, have I said too much? Will she ever consent to receive me again, now that she knows I love her? But does she know it? and does she care to know it?"

In this fashion I groaned over the uncertainty of my fate, when my attention was violently diverted by the tones of a familiar voice. I raised my eyes and saw Monsieur Mille standing up in a café and singing in the midst of a group of women "patriots" and "citizens." He was dressed as a national guard, and with his left arm he encircled a young woman, in whom I recognized one of the flower-sellers from Ramponneau. To the tune of *Lisette* he was singing these words:—

"Though patriots hundreds strong
To break our bonds are fain,
Women, in thousands, long
To readjust the chain;

Tradition holds them fast,
With pitying scorn they view
Whoso abhors the past
And welcomes in the new." [1]

This verse was received with a murmur of approval. Monsieur Mille smiled, bowed gracefully, and then, turning to his companion, recommenced his song—

"Ah! not with such join hands,
Sophie, beloved maid!
Philosophy's commands
Yield kindlier, holier aid:
Her guidance she outpours
On those—O happy chance!—
Who to Her rights restores
Our own, our much wronged France." [2]

[1] S'il est douze cents députés
Qui brisent nos entraves,
Le vœu de cent mille beautés
Est de nous rendre esclaves:
Toutes nos dames ont regret
A l'ancien régime,
Et louer un nouveau décret
C'est perdre leur estime.

[2] Ah! ne les imitez jamais,
Adorable Sophie,
Et connaissez mieux les bienfaits
De la philosophie;
C'est elle qui dicte les lois
Aux Solons de la France,
Et qui fera dans tous ses droits
Rentrer un peuple immense.

Applause followed, and Monsieur Mille, drawing from his pocket a bunch of ribbons, handed it to Sophie as he resumed his song—

"Hasten then, far and wide,
This gay cockade to show,
Which fills my breast with pride,
When to my guard I go.
What's gold, with tawdry glint,
To the bud which half uncloses?
This badge of triple tint
Outvies the fairest roses." [1]

Sophie fastened the ribbon in her cap, and swept the audience with a glance comprehending both triumph and vacancy. Again there was applause. Monsieur Mille bowed. He gazed at the crowd without recognizing me or anybody else; or, rather, in that crowd he was conscious only of himself.

"Ah! monsieur," exclaimed my neighbour, who in his enthusiasm was bestowing on me a tender embrace; "ah! if the Prussians or the Austrians

[1] Hâtez-vouz donc de l'arborer
Cette belle cocarde,
Dont j'aime tant à me parer
Quand je monte ma garde:
Vous devez préférer à l'or
Les fleurs à peine écloses;
Ce joli ruban tricolor
A tout l'eclat des roses.

could see that! They would shudder, monsieur! We were betrayed into their hands at Longwy and Verdun. But if they reached Paris it would be their tomb. The spirit of the populace is altogether martial. I have just come from the Tuileries gardens, monsieur. There I heard some singers stationed in front of the statue of Liberty giving voice to the war song of the *Marseillais*. A frenzied crowd was shouting in chorus the refrain *'Aux armes, citoyens!'* If the Prussians had only been there! They would have disappeared underground!"

The man who thus discoursed to me was a very ordinary person, neither handsome nor ugly, neither short nor tall. He was as like his neighbour as two peas, and there was nothing about him individual or distinctive. As he spoke rather loudly he was soon surrounded. After coughing impressively, he continued—

"The enemy is approaching from Chalons. We must encircle them with a ring of steel. Citizens, it is we who must have an eye to the public welfare. Put not your trust in generals, nor in staff officers and troops of the line, nor in ministers of State, even though you have elected them yourselves; no, not even in your representatives at the Convention. We must be our own salvation."

"Bravo!" cried some one in the audience; "let us fly to Chalons!"

A little man here made a spirited interruption.

"Patriots have no business to leave Paris until the traitors have been exterminated."

These words were uttered in a voice which I instantly recognized. On that point I could not be deceived. That tremendous head waggling about on a narrow pair of shoulders, that dull livid face, that shape at once mean and monstrous, could belong to none other than my old schoolmaster —Father Joursanvault. His cassock had given place to a wretched jacket. His countenance sweated hate and apostasy. I looked in another direction, but I could not avoid hearing the old Oratorian continue his discourse in this manner:

"Enough blood was not shed during the glorious days of September. The populace is ever too inclined to magnanimity, and has been too tender towards conspirators and traitors."

At these terrible words I took to my heels horror-struck. In my childhood I had suspected Monsieur Joursanvault of being neither just nor benevolent. I disliked him, indeed. But I was far from fathoming the blackness of his soul. At the discovery that my old master was nothing but an unprincipled ras-

cal, I was overwhelmed with mingled bitterness and grief.

"Oh, that I were still but a child!" I exclaimed. "What is the use of life if it cannot bring us to anything better than dilemmas such as this? Dear principal, dear Father Féval, my recollections of you must temper the sorrows that overwhelm me! Into what dangers has the tempest cast you, my dear and only master? This I know, at any rate, that wherever you may be, humanity, pity, and heroism prevail all around you. You taught me, reverend master, the worth of rectitude and courage. You foresaw the days of trial and strengthened my heart. May your pupil, your son, never show himself too unworthy of your care!"

I had hardly concluded this mental invocation when I felt inspired with fresh courage. And my thoughts harking back by a natural inclination to my dear Amélie, I realized all in a moment what my duty was, and resolved to fulfil it. I had disclosed my feelings to Amélie; was I not bound to make the same declaration to Madame Berthemet?

I was only a few paces from the door, for in my self-communing I had naturally drifted towards the house which contained my Amélie. I entered and made my avowal.

Madame Berthemet smilingly replied that my con-

duct was praiseworthy. Then adopting a graver tone, she said—

"I am going to make you my confidant since I cannot otherwise satisfy you. Do not delude yourself; you must abandon all hope. My daughter is beloved by the Chevalier de St. Ange, and I believe that she is not insensible to his devotion. I should be glad enough, however, if she were to dismiss him from her thoughts. For our fortunes are on the wane from day to day, and the Chevalier's love is consequently put to a test which the most ardent sentiments are not always proof against."

The Chevalier de St. Ange! I shuddered at the name. I had a rival, and that rival the most fascinating of poets, the most attractive of novelists. Birth, connections, good looks, talents, he possessed everything calculated to smooth his path. Only the previous evening I had observed in a lady's hands a tortoiseshell box, with a portrait in miniature, mounted on the lid, of the Chevalier de St. Ange, in the uniform of a dragoon.

As I caught sight of it I envied him, as did every other man of his acquaintance, his manly elegance and inimitable grace. Every morning I could hear my neighbour, the mercer's wife, singing at her doorstep the immortal ballad known as *The Pledge*—

Thou who shouldst never have seen the light,
Pledge, beloved, that my fault endears;
Never, ah never, thou luckless wight,
Frailty of mine to thine eyes bring tears.[1]

But a little while since I had been reading with delight the philosophical romance which opened the doors of the French Academy to the Chevalier de St. Ange; that admirable *Cynégyre* which leaves far behind it the *Numa Pompilius* of Monsieur Florian. "Your *Cynégyre,*" said the venerable Monsieur Sedaine to the Chevalier de St. Ange, as he received him into the illustrious company, "your *Cynégyre* was dedicated to the manes of Fénelon, and the offering was not unworthy of the altar." Such was my rival—the impassioned author of *The Pledge*—a man of whom people spoke in one breath with Fénelon and Voltaire! I could not overcome my embarrassment; astonishment numbed my distress.

"What, Madame!" I exclaimed, "the Chevalier de St. Ange!"

"Yes," rejoined Madame Berthemet, shaking her head, "a brilliant writer. But do not imagine for

[1] O toi qui n'eus jamais dû naître,
Gage trop cher d'un fol amour;
Puisses-tu ne jamais connaître,
L'erreur qui te donna le jour! (*Le Gage.*)

a moment that he is personally the man you would conjecture from his heroical poems. Alas! as our fortunes diminish his love ebbs with them."

She added kindly that she regretted that her daughter's choice had not fallen upon me.

"Talents," she said, "do not make for happiness. On the contrary, men endowed with extraordinary powers, poets and orators, ought to live single. What need of companions have they who cannot mate with their equals. Their genius alone is sufficient to foster egotism. One cannot be an eminent man without incurring the penalties."

But I was no longer heedful of her remarks. I could not shake off my astonishment. Her disclosure had killed my love. I had never hoped for its return, and, without hope, love is not endued with any considerable vitality. Mine died at the utterance of a single word.

The Chevalier de St. Ange! Shall I admit it? Although my heart bled, my self-esteem experienced a sort of satisfaction at the thought that, forestalled by such a rival, anybody else, no matter who, would have met the same fate as myself. I pressed a hundred kisses on Madame Berthemet's hands, and left her house calmly, silently, slowly, a mere shadow of the ardent lover who had entered

but an hour before, determined to make a clean breast of his scruples and his passion to the mother of Amélie. I was disconsolate. Not that I suffered. I was simply filled with surprise, shame, and fear at the discovery that I could outlive what had seemed the best part of me, my love.

As I crossed the Pont Neuf to regain my deserted faubourg, I saw in the open space, at the foot of the pedestal upon which the statue of Henri IV had recently been erected, a singer from the Academy of Music, who was declaiming in a moving voice the hymn of the *Marseillais*. The crowd which had collected round him, with bare heads, took up the refrain in chorus, *"Aux armes, citoyens!"* But when the singer struck up the last verse, *"Amour sacré de la Patrie,"* in slow and solemn tones, a shiver of unearthly exaltation passed through the crowd. At the line—

Liberté, liberté chérie . .

I fell on my knees upon the pavement, and beheld all the people around me likewise fallen prostrate. O, my country, my country! what spells do you weave that your children worship you so? Even from out the mire and the blood your image rises radiant. My country! happy are they who die for

you. The sun, which was now dipping towards the horizon, surrounded by blood-hued clouds, lit into liquid flame the waters of the most famous of rivers. Hail to you, ultimate illumination of my days of happiness!

Alack! into what a winter of discontent I passed that night! When I closed the door of my little chamber in the roof of the Duc de Puybonne's mansion, I felt as though I were cementing the stone over my own tomb.

"All is over!" I said through my sobs. "I love Amélie no longer. But how is it that I am forced to remind myself of the fact so untiringly? How is it that, loving her no longer, I cannot turn my thoughts away from her? Why do I lament so bitterly the uprooting of my wretched love?"

Cruel anxieties were added to my personal sorrows. The state of public affairs was driving me to desperation. My destitution was extreme, and, far from cherishing the hope of obtaining work, I was reduced to concealing myself for fear of being arrested as a suspicious character.

Monsieur Mille had not put in an appearance at the house since the 10th of August. I have no idea where he lodged; but he never missed a single sitting of the Commune, and every day before the

municipality, amid enthusiastic applause from the *tricoteuses*[1] and *sans-culottes,* he would recite a new patriotic hymn. Indeed he was the most patriotic of poets, and citizen Dorat-Cubières himself, beside him, was a timid *Feuillant,*[2] under the grave suspicion of the demagogues. I had been engaged in incriminating transactions; moreover, Monsieur Mille made no attempt to visit me, and my own scruples made it an easy duty for me not to go in search of him. Nevertheless, being a good-hearted man, he sent me his collection of songs when the printing was completed. Ah, how slight the resemblance between his second muse and his first! The latter had been powdered, painted, perfumed. The new one resembled a fury, with serpents for locks of hair. I can still recall the song of the *sans-cullotes,* which aimed at being very malicious. It began thus—

Long, long enough, yea far too long
Dread tyranny has claimed our song,
And despots swayed our lot.
Now breaks the dawn of Liberty,

[1] The women who formed part of the revolutionary mobs were known as *tricoteuses* from their habit of knitting at all seasons, even at the foot of the guillotine; the *sans-culottes* were the men of the same class. Their nether garments, of course, were rather in rags and tatters than wanting altogether. (TRANS.)

[2] A member of an anti-Jacobin Society, known as *Feuillants.* (TRANS.)

Of Law, and fair Equality:
All hail! the Sans-Culottes![1]

The trial of the king aroused me to indescribable distress. My days rolled by in horror. One morning there was a knock at the door. I divined somehow that it proceeded from a gentle and friendly hand. I opened, and Madame Berthemet flung herself into my arms.

"Save me, save us!" she said. "My brother, Monsieur Eustance, my only brother, was scheduled as an *émigré*,[2] and came to seek shelter in my house. He was denounced and arrested. He has been in prison now for five days. Luckily the accusation which hangs over him is vague and ill-founded. My brother was never an *émigré*. To effect his release, all that is necessary is that some one who can vouch for his unbroken residence in France will give evidence in his favour. I begged the Chevalier de St. Ange to do me this service. He prudently begged to be excused. Well! my friend, my son, that service which it would be perilous to him

[1] Amis, assez et trop longtemps,
Sous le règne affreux des tyrans,
On chanta les despotes.
Sous celui de l'Egalité
Des Lois et de la Liberté,
Chantons les Sans-Culottes.

[2] A person who had left France without a licence from the Government. (TRANS.)

to render me, to you will be still more perilous; yet I come to ask it of you."

I thanked her for her request as if it had been a favour. And, indeed, it was so to be regarded, and of a quality so inestimable that an upright man could scarcely be honoured by a greater.

"Well enough I knew that you would not refuse!" exclaimed Madame Berthemet, embracing me. "But this is not all," she added. "You will need to procure a second witness; they demand that two shall come forward if my brother is to be released. Oh, my friend, what times we are living in! Monsieur de St. Ange keeps aloof from us; our misfortunes embarrass him; and Monsieur Mille would be afraid to visit folks under suspicion. Who would have thought it, my friend—who would have thought it? Do you remember Federation Day? We were all brimful of enthusiasm about fraternity, and I had on a very becoming dress."

She was in tears when she left me. I descended the stairs almost immediately after her to go in search of a guarantor, and to tell the truth I was considerably puzzled to put my hands on one. As I bowed my head in my hands I realized that I had a beard of eight days' growth, which might render me an object of suspicion; so I betook myself at once to my barber's at the corner of the

Rue St. Guillaume. This barber was a very worthy fellow named Larisse, as tall as a poplar and as restless as an aspen. When I entered his shop he was attending to a wine merchant of the neighbourhood, who with his face smothered in lather was pouring out all sorts of playful threats.

"Ah, my fine fellow, you dandifier of fine ladies," he was saying, "your head will be cut off and stuck on the end of a pike to gratify your aristocratic inclinations. Every enemy of the people must add his quota to the basket,[1] from the fat Capet to the slim Larisse. And, *ça ira,* so it will be!"

Monsieur Larisse, paler than moonshine and fluttering like a leaf, observed the utmost precautions as he shaved the chin of the abusive patriot. I can affirm that never did barber experience greater terror. And from this circumstance I drew a happy augury for the success of the design I had suddenly conceived. It was my intention, to be plain, to ask Monsieur Larisse to accompany me before the committee as the second guarantor.

"He is such a coward," I reflected, "that he will never dare to protest."

[1] The basket into which the heads of the guillotined fell. (TRANS.)

The wine merchant withdrew muttering fresh threats, and left me alone with the barber, who, still trembling, fastened a napkin around my neck.

"Ah, monsieur!" he whispered in my ear, in a voice feebler than a sigh, "hell is let loose upon us! Was it for the accommodation of demons like this that I studied the art of hairdressing? The heads which did honour to my skill are now in London or in Coblentz. How is Monseigneur le Duc de Puybonne? He was a good master."

I informed him that the Duke was living in London, and giving writing lessons. Indeed, the Duke had managed recently to convey to me a paper in which he told me that he was living, perfectly contented, in London, on four shillings and sixpence a day.

"It may be so," replied Monsieur Larisse, "but in London hairdressing is not performed as it is in Paris. The English can make constitutions, but they don't know how to make wigs, and their powder is not nearly white enough."

Monsieur Larisse soon had me shaven. I had not a very harsh beard at that time. Scarcely had he closed his razor than, seizing him by the wrist, I said to him firmly—

"My dear Monsieur Larisse, you are a valiant man; you are coming with me before the General

Assembly of the Section des Postes in the one-time church of St. Eustache. There you will bear witness jointly with me that Monsieur Eustance has never been an *émigré*."

At these words Monsieur Larisse grew pale, and murmured in inanimate tones—

"But I am not acquainted with Monsieur Eustance."

"For that matter, neither am I," I replied.

Which was indeed strictly true. I had correctly diagnosed the character of Monsieur Larisse. He was dumbfounded. His very fear thrust him into the perilous emprise. I took him by the arm and he followed me unresistingly.

"But you are leading me to my death," he said softly.

"To glory rather," I replied.

I don't know whether he was familiar with the tragedians, but he was sensible of the honour and appeared flattered. He had some knowledge of literature, for loosing my arm to go into his back shop, he said—

"A moment, dear sir; let me at least put on my best coat. In the olden times the victims were decked with flowers. I find it recorded in the *Almanack for Honest Men*."

From his chest of drawers he took a blue coat

which he flung round his long, mobile body. Thus attired he accompanied me to the General Assembly of the Section des Postes, which was sitting continuously.

On the threshhold of the desecrated church, on the door of which was inscribed the motto, *"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death,"* Monsieur Larisse felt the sweat break out on his forehead; nevertheless he went in. One of the citizens who was sleeping there on a heap of empty bottles, half aroused himself to inquire our business, and then sent us on to the revolutionary committee of the Section.

I knew this committee through having accompanied Monsieur Berthemet there on two occasions. The president of it was a small lodging-house keeper in the Rue de la Truanderie, whose most regular customers were ladies of easy virtue. Amongst the members there were an itinerant knife-grinder, a porter, and a dyer and cleaner named Bistac. It was with the knife-grinder that we had to do. He was seated informally with his sleeves turned up; we found him a good-natured fellow.

"Citizens," he said, "from the moment you place before me an attestation in due form, I have no objections to raise, because I am a magistrate and

consequently the proper formalities are all I demand. I would only add one word. A man who has intelligence and character ought not to be authorized to leave Paris at a moment like this. Because, you see, citizens——"

He hesitated, and then, making use of gesture to express his meaning, he stretched out his bare and muscular arm and then moved it to his forehead, which he tapped with a finger, and continued—"It is not of this alone" (here he indicated his arm, the working tool) "that we have need, but of this also" (here he motioned to his forehead, the seat of intellect).

He then boasted of his natural gifts, and lamented that his parents had not contrived to give him any instruction. Then he set himself to the task of signing our declaration. Despite his good will this was a long process. Whilst, with hands accustomed to the grindstone, he painfully manipulated the pen, Bistac the cleaner came into the room. Bistac had not the genial nature of the grinder. His soul was a Jacobin. At sight of us his forehead puckered and his nostrils swelled: he scented the aristocrat.

"Who are you?" he demanded of me.

"Pierre Aubier."

"Oh, oh! Pierre Aubier, and I suppose you flatter yourself that you will sleep in your own bed to-night?"

I put a cool face on the situation, but my companion began to shudder in every limb. His bones rattled so loudly that Bistac's attention was attracted, and, forgetting me, he turned his scrutiny on to poor Larisse.

"You have all the marks of a conspirator, in my opinion," said Bistac in a terrible voice. "What is your profession?"

"A barber, at your service, citizen."

"All barbers are Feuillants!"

Terror commonly inspired Monsieur Larisse to the most courageous actions. He has since confessed to me that at this moment he had all the difficulty in the world to prevent himself from shouting "Long live the King!" As a matter of fact, he did no such thing, but replied proudly that he owed small thanks to the Revolution, which had suppressed wigs and powder, and that he was tired of living in a continual state of apprehension.

"Take off my head," he added. "I should prefer to get my dying over, rather than to live in constant fear."

Bistac became perplexed at talk like this.

Meanwhile, the knife-grinder, who was revolving many confused but kindly thoughts in his brain, recommended us to withdraw.

"Off with you, citizens," he said; "but bear in mind that the Republic has need of this."

And he pointed to his forehead.

Madame Berthemet's brother was released next day. The mother of Amélie expressed abundance of gratitude and embraced me—it was a way she had. She did better.

"You have," said she, "acquired a right to the gratitude of Amélie. I am desirous that my daughter should herself come and express her indebtedness to you. She owes you an uncle. It is less than a mother, it is true; but what commendations does not your courage deserve. . . ."

She went in search of Amélie.

Left alone in the drawing-room, I waited. I asked myself whether I had the strength to see her once more. I feared, I hoped. I died a thousand deaths.

In about five minutes Madame Berthemet reappeared, alone.

"You must excuse an ungrateful girl," she said. "My daughter refuses to come. 'I could not endure his presence,' she declared. 'The sight of him would be torture to me; henceforth I hate him.

By showing greater courage than the man I love, he has gained a cruel advantage. I will never see him again while I live. He is generous: he will forgive me.'"

After she had repeated this speech to me Madame Berthemet concluded with these words:

"Forget the ungrateful child!"

I promised to endeavour to do so, and I kept my word. Events contributed to my success. The Terror reigned. That appalling day, the 31st of May, snatched their last hopes from those of the moderate party.

Several times I was denounced as a conspirator on the score of the correspondence I maintained with the Duc de Puybonne, and I was continually risking both liberty and life.

I had no longer a certificate of citizenship, and, not daring to apply for one for fear of being instantly put under arrest, my existence had become unendurable.

There was a demand just then for twelve hundred thousand men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. I entered my name. On the 7th of Brumaire in the year II, at six o'clock in the morning, I set out on the way to Nancy to join my regiment. With a forage cap on my head, a knapsack on my back, and wearing the jacket called

a carmagnole, I felt myself fairly martial in appearance.

From time to time I turned my gaze back on the great city where I had suffered so much and loved so profoundly. Then, wiping away a tear, I resumed my journey. I decided to sing in order to cheer myself up, and I began the hymn of the *Marseillais*—

Allons, enfants de la Patrie!

At the first halting-place I presented my credentials to some peasants, who sent me to pass the night in the stable on the straw. There I enjoyed a delicious sleep, and as I awakened I thought—

"Well, this is better. I am no longer in danger of the guillotine. So far as I can judge, I am no longer in love with Amélie—or rather I never have been in love with her. I am going to carry a sword and a gun. I shall have nothing else to fear but the Austrian bullets. Brindamour and Trompelamort are right: there is no finer calling than that of a soldier. But who would have dreamed when I was studying Latin under the flowering apple trees at Monsieur Lamadou's that one day I should take arms in the defence of the Republic? Ah! Monsieur Féval, who could have foreseen that your little pupil Pierre would march away to the wars?"

At the next halt a worthy woman put me to sleep in white sheets because I reminded her of her son.

The following day I lodged with a canoness who put me in a loft open to the wind and rain, and even this she did with a very perturbed mind, for a defender of the Republic seemed to her so very near to a dangerous species of brigand.

Finally, I came up with my corps on the banks of the Meuse. I received a sword. At this I reddened with gratification, and felt myself at least a foot taller. Do not laugh at me on that account; it was a case of vanity, I admit it; but vanity goes to the making of a hero. We were scarcely fitted out before we received orders to start for Maubeuge.

We arrived on the Sambre on a dark night. Silence was all around. We could see fires flickering on the hills on the opposite side of the river. I was told that they were the bivouacs of the enemy. Then my heart thumped as if it would burst.

It was from Titus Livy that I had got my ideas of war. But I call you to witness, woods, meadows, hills, banks of the Sambre and the Meuse, that those ideas were delusive. War, such as I took part in, consists of passing through burnt-up villages, sleeping in the mire, listening to the whistle of bullets through the long and melancholy sentry

duty of nights; but of single combats and ordered battlefields I saw never a sign. We slept but little, and did not eat at all. Floridor, my sergeant, an old soldier of the French Guard, swore that the life we were leading was festive; he exaggerated, but we were not unhappy, for we had the consciousness of doing our duty and being useful to our country.

We were justly proud of our regiment, which had covered itself with glory at Wattignies. For the greater part of it was made up of soldiers of the old *régime,* stout and well instructed. As a large number of men had perished in various engagements, the gaps had been filled up anyhow with youthful recruits. Without the veterans who encircled us we should have been worth nothing. It takes a good deal of time to make a soldier and in war enthusiasm is no substitute for experience.

My colonel was a one-time nobleman from my native province. He treated me kindly. A lifelong Royalist, a countryman not a townsman, a soldier not a courtier, he had long delayed exchanging the white coat of His Majesty's troops for the blue coat of the soldiers of the year II. He detested the Republic, and dedicated the remainder of his life to it.

I bless Providence for having guided me to the frontier, since there virtue still survives.

[Written in bivouac, on the Sambre, between septidi the 27th of Frimaire, and sextidi the 6th of Nivôse, in the year II of the French Republic, by Pierre Aubier, volunteer.]

DAWN

TO MADEMOISELLE LÉONIE BERNARDINI

DAWN

HE Cours-La-Reine was deserted. The green banks of the Seine, the ancient pollarded beeches whose shadows began to stretch out towards the east, the calm azure of the sky, cloudless, breezeless, unthreatening but unsmiling, all were wrapped in the deep silence that marks the summer day. A pedestrian coming from the Tuileries made his way slowly towards the hills of Chaillot. His figure was of the agreeable slightness characteristic of early youth, and he wore the coat, breeches, and black stockings indicative of the bourgeois, whose supremacy had at length come round. Yet his countenance was rather that of a dreamer than of the enthusiast. He had a book in his hand; and his finger between the leaves marked the place he had reached, but he had ceased to read. Now and then he stopped and strained his ears to catch the faint yet terrible murmur which rose up from Paris, and in this muffled noise, feebler than a sigh, he fancied he could distinguish cries of death and hate, joy and love, drum-beats, the sound of fire-

arms—all the din, in fact, of insensate fury and sublime enthusiasm which ascends heavenward from crowded streets at the outbreak of revolution. At times he turned his head and shuddered. Everything reported to him, everything he had seen and heard for some hours past filled his brain with confused and terrible pictures: the Bastille captured by the people and already denuded of its battlements; the provost of the merchant's guild slain by a pistol-shot in the midst of a furious crowd; the governor, the venerable de Launay, hewn down on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville; the dreadful populace, pale as famine or as deathly fear, drunken, beside itself, dazed by the vision of blood and glory, reeling from the Bastille to the Grève, and above the heads of a hundred thousand deluded people the bodies of the victims swinging from a lamp-post, and the oak-crowned brow of one of the exultant clad in a uniform of blue and white; the conquerors with the registers, the keys and the silver plate belonging to the ancient fortress, mounting amid acclamation the blood-stained steps; and at their head the popular magistrates La Fayette and Bailly, overwrought, uplifted, amazed, their feet dabbled in blood, their heads touching the clouds with pride! Then, fear still paramount with the unleashed rabble, at the scattered noises customarily attendant on

the return of the Royal troops to the town at night, the tearing down of the palace railings for conversion into pikes, the pillage of the arsenals, the construction by the citizens of the street barricades, and the transportation by the women to the roofs of houses of stones to hurl down on the foreign regiments!

These scenes of violence were reconstructed in his dreamy youthful imagination in subdued tones. He had taken his favourite book, an English work entitled *Meditations Among the Tombs,* and made his way along the Seine, under the trees of the Cours-la-Reine, towards the white house which, night and day, filled his thoughts. All was calm around him. On the river bank he noticed the anglers sitting with their feet in the water, and he followed the course of the stream in an abstracted mood. When he reached the slopes of the hills of Chaillot he met a patrol party, keeping an eye on the communications between Paris and Versailles. This troop, armed with guns, muskets, and halberds, included artisans wearing their aprons of leather or serge, lawyers dressed in black, one priest, and a bearded, bare-legged giant in a shirt. They challenged every would-be passer-by: communications between the Court and the governor of the Bastille had been detected and a surprise was feared.

But this pedestrian was young and of ingenuous appearance. He had scarcely uttered a word or two before the troop smilingly permitted him to continue his journey.

He ascended the slope of a lane odorous of flowering elder, and stopped half-way up in front of a garden gate. This garden was but little, but by means of winding alleys and abrupt turns the space for exercise was considerably extended. Into a pool where ducks were disporting themselves, willows dipped the tips of their branches. At the corner by the street a light alcove had been constructed, and a grass plot spread its freshness in front of the house. Here, on a rustic bench, with her head bent, a young woman was seated; her face was hidden by a large straw hat wreathed with natural flowers. Over her dress, which was of white and rose colour, in stripes, she wore a fichu, fastened at the waistline, this latter a trifle high, giving the skirt an added length that was not unbecoming. Her arms, encased in tight sleeves, were at rest. A basket of an antique pattern, which lay at her feet, held balls of wool. Close by her a child was piling up heaps of sand with his shovel. His blue eyes shone through a tangle of golden hair.

The young woman remained motionless and, as it were , spell-bound, and the young man standing at

the gate could not bring himself to break so sweet a spell. At length she raised her head and disclosed a youthful, almost infantile face, with pure rounded lines which imparted a natural expression of gentleness and friendliness. He bowed before her, and she held out her hand.

"How do you do, Monsieur Germain? What is the news? 'What news do you bring with you?' as the song says. I don't know very much, except songs."

"Pardon me, Madame, for having disturbed your dreams. I was gazing at you. Alone, motionless, your head resting on your hand, it seemed as though you must be the angel of meditation."

"Alone! alone!" she replied, as if this were the only word she had heard. "Alone! Is she ever alone?"

And seeing that he was looking at her uncomprehendingly, she added—

"Enough of that! It is nothing but a fancy of mine that—— What is your news?"

Thereupon he went over the events of the famous day, the taking of the Bastille, the foundation of liberty.

Sophie listened to him gravely; then she said—

"It is our duty to rejoice, but our joy should be the austere joy which comes of sacrifice. Hence-

forth the French are their own men no longer; they are the servants of the Revolution which is about to reform the world."

As she was speaking the child approached and threw himself joyfully across her knees.

"Look, mamma! Look at my pretty garden!"

Embracing him, she said—

"You are right, little Emile, it is the wisest thing in the world to lay out a pretty garden."

"Yes, he is right," added Germain; "what gallery glowing with porphyry and gold can be compared with a green alley?"

And reflecting how sweet it would be to give this fair woman the support of his arm and lead her to the shade of the trees—

"Ah!" he exclaimed, flashing a meaning glance at her, "what are men and revolutions to me!"

"No, no!" she rejoined, "I cannot so abruptly turn my thoughts from a great people, intent on inaugurating the reign of justice. My attachment to the new ideas surprises you, Monsieur Germain. We have only known one another for quite a brief time. You are not aware, of course, that my father taught me to read in the *Social Contract* and the Gospels. One day, as we were walking, he pointed out Jean Jacques Rousseau to me. I was only a child, but I dissolved in tears at sight of the gloomy

countenance of the wisest of men. I grew up a hater of prejudice. Later on my husband, like myself a disciple of the philosophy of nature, decided that our son should be called Emile, and that he should be taught to labour with his hands. In his last letter, written three years ago on board the ship upon which he perished some days afterwards, he continues to urge on my attention Rousseau's precepts upon education. I am saturated with the new spirit of the age. It is my conviction that we must struggle for justice and truth."

"Like yourself, Madame," sighed Germaine, "I have a horror of fanaticism and tyranny; like yourself, I am in love with liberty, but my soul is drained of its strength. At every moment my thoughts escape my control. I am no longer master of myself and I suffer accordingly."

The young woman did not reply. An elderly man pushed open the gate and came forward with his arms raised, waving his hat. He wore neither powder nor wig. A few long grey hairs fell down on each side of his bald head. He wore a complete suit of grey ratteen; his stockings were blue and his shoes buckleless.

"Victory! victory!" he cried. "The monster is delivered into our hands, Sophie, and I am the bearer of news to you."

"Neighbour, I have just heard of it from Monsieur Marcel Germain, whom I want to introduce to you. His mother and mine were friends at Angers. During the six months he has spent in Paris he has been kind enough to come to see me from time to time in the seclusion of my hermitage. Monsieur Germain, this gentleman is my neighbour and friend, Monsieur Franchot de La Cavanne, a man of letters."

"Say rather, 'Nicolas Franchot, labourer.' "

"I know, dear friend, that you thus signed your treatise on the Corn Trade. I will say then, to gratify you, although I expect your hands are much more adroit with the pen than with the plough, Monsieur Nicolas Franchot, labourer."

The older man grasped Marcel's hand and exclaimed—

"It has fallen, then, that fortress which has so many times engulfed the wronged and guiltless! Those bolts behind which I passed eight months, deprived both of air and light, have been torn from their places. It was one-and-thirty years ago, on the 17th of February, 1758, that I was cast into the Bastille for having written an epistle on tolerance. Now, to-day, at length the people have avenged me. Right and I are triumphant together. The memory of this day will remain so long as

the universe endures. I call as witness to it the sun which saw Harmodius perish, and the brood of Tarquin put to flight!"

The piercing voice of Monsieur Franchot frightened little Emile, who clutched his mother's dress. Franchot, suddenly becoming aware of the child's presence, lifted him from the ground and said enthusiastically—

"Happier than we have been, dear child, you will grow up free!"

But Emile, terrified, turned his face away and uttered loud cries.

"Gentlemen," said Sophie, as she wiped away her little son's tears, "will you be so kind as to stay to supper with me? I am expecting Monsieur Duvernay, provided he is not detained by the bedside of one of his patients."

Then turning towards Marcel—

"You must know that Monsieur Duvernay, the king's physician, is an elector of Paris without the walls. He would be a deputy of the National Assembly if, like Monsieur de Condorcet, he had not out of modesty declined the honour. He is a man of great attainments, and it will be both pleasant and profitable to you to hear him converse."

"Young man," added Franchot, "I am acquainted

with Monsieur Jean Duvernay, and I know one circumstance about him which does him honour. Two years ago the queen summoned him to attend on the Dauphin, who was threatened with decline. At that time, Duvernay was residing at Sévres, whither one of the Court carriages was sent every morning to convey him to Saint Cloud, where the royal child lay ill. One day the carriage returned to the palace empty. Duvernay had not come. The following day the queen reproached him for absenting himself.

"Doctor," she said, "you forgot your patient the Dauphin, then?"

"Madame," replied the worthy man, "I am caring for your son assiduously, but yesterday I was detained by the bedside of a peasant woman in labour."

"Well now!" remarked Sophie, "wasn't that noble of him, and oughtn't we to be proud of our friend!"

"Yes; it was fine," replied Germain.

A grave, sweet voice close beside them here interposed—

"I do not know," said the voice, "what it is that is exciting you to admiration; but it is pleasant to hear your transports. In these days there are so many admirable deeds to be witnessed."

The man who spoke wore a powdered wig and a delicate lace frill. It was Jean Duvernay. Marcel recognized his face from the engravings he had seen in the shops in the Palais Royal.

"I have just come from Versailles," said Duvernay. "I owe to the Duke of Orleans the pleasure of seeing you this memorable day, Sophie. He brought me in his coach as far as Saint Cloud. The rest of the way I travelled in the most convenient fashion—I mean on my own feet."

And as a matter of fact, his silver-buckled shoes and black stockings were covered all over with dust.

Emile clung with his little hands to the steel buttons which glittered on the doctor's coat, and Duvernay, coaxing him on to his knee, found material for smiles in glimpses at the little creature's budding soul. Sophie summoned Nanon. A sturdy girl appeared, who picked up and carried the child off in her arms, stifling beneath resounding kisses his despairing cries.

The table was laid in the garden alcove. Sophie hung her straw hat on a willow branch; her fair hair fell in curls about her cheeks.

"You will sup in the simplest possible way," she said, "in the English fashion."

From the spot where they were seated they could see the Seine, the roofs of the city, the domes and

the steeples. The spectacle rendered them as silent as though they were looking out on Paris for the first time. After a while they spoke of the occurrences of the day, of the Assembly, of universal suffrage, of the breaking down of class barriers, and Monsieur Necker's banishment. All four were agreed that a lasting liberty was at last achieved. Monsieur Duvernay foretold the rise of a new order, and applauded the wisdom of the legislators popularly elected. But his mind was not uplifted, and at times it seemed as though his hopes were alloyed with a certain uneasiness. Nicolas Franchot did not observe the same moderation. He proclaimed the peaceful triumph of the people and the era of fraternity.

Vainly did the physician, vainly the young woman assure him—

"It is only now that the struggle begins. We are only as yet at our first victory."

"Philosophy is our ruler," he would reply. "What benefits will not Reason shower on men who accept her all potent sway! The Golden Age which the poets fabled will become a reality. All ills will disappear with the fanaticism and tyranny which gave them birth. The virtuous and enlightened man will enjoy all possible felicity. What do I say? By the aid of physicians and chemists

he will even succeed in attaining immortality upon earth."

Sophie listened to him, but shook her head.

"If you wish to deprive us of death," she said, "find us first a fountain of youth. Without that your immortality awakens my apprehension."

The old philosopher laughingly asked her if she found the Christian doctrine of resurrection more comforting.

"For my part," he said, after emptying his glass, "I am inclined to fear lest the angels and saints should feel impelled to favour the choir of virgins at the expense of the company of dowagers."

"I do not know," replied the young woman, in a meditative tone and lifting her eyes to his, "I do not know what value these poor charms, framed out of the dust of the earth, may have in the eyes of angels; but I am sure that divine omnipotence will be better able to repair the ravages of time, if in so blissful an abode such redress should be needful, than all your physics and your chemistry will ever succeed in doing in this world. You, who are an atheist, Monsieur Franchot, and do not believe that God reigns in the heavens, you cannot understand anything about the Revolution, which is the advent of God upon earth."

She rose. Night had fallen, and in the distance

under their eyes the great town starred itself with lights.

Marcel offered his arm to Sophie, and whilst the older men argued with one another, the two sauntered together along the sombre alleys. Marcel found them charming, and Sophie supplied him in turn with their names and associations.

"Here," she said, "we are in the Allée de Jean Jacques, which leads to the Salon d'Emile. This alley was straight. I had it deflected so that it should pass under the old oak. All day long it gives shade to this rustic bench, which I have called 'Friendship's Rest.'

"We will sit down for a moment on this bench," said Sophie.

They sat down. In the silence Marcel could hear the fluttering of his own heart.

"Sophie, I love you," he murmured, and captured her hand.

She drew it away gently, and pointing out to the young man that a light breeze had set the leaves rustling—

"Do you hear that?" she said.

"I hear the wind among the leaves."

She shook her head and said in tones as sweet as a chant—

"Marcel, Marcel! Who tells you that is the

wind among the leaves? Who tells you that we are alone? Are you, then, after all, one of those commonplace souls which have failed to discern any of the mysterious portents of the world unseen?"

And as he questioned her with a glance that was all bewilderment—

"Monsieur Germain," she said, "be so kind as to go upstairs to my room. You will find a little book on the table, and bring it to me . . ."

He obeyed. All the while he was absent the young widow gazed at the dusky foliage shivering in the night wind. He returned with a little gilt-edged volume.

"*The Idylls of Gesner;* yes, that is it," said Sophie. "Open the book at the place where the marker lies, and, if your eyes are good enough to read by moonlight, read."

He read these words:

"Ah! Often will my soul come to hover around you; often when, inflamed by a noble and sublime thought, you are meditating in solitude, a light breath will brush your cheek: at such a moment may your soul be conscious of a gladdening thrill! . . ."

She stopped him.

"Now do you understand, Marcel, that we are never alone, and that there are words to which I

can never listen so long as a breath blown landward from the sea shall set in motion the leaves of the oaks."

The voices of the two older men drew near.

"God is Goodness," said Duvernay.

"God is evil," said Franchot, "and we shall extinguish it."

Both of them, and Marcel also, took leave of Sophie.

"Adieu, gentlemen," she said. "Let us all cry, 'Hurrah for Liberty, and long live the King!' And you, dear neighbour, do not hinder us from dying when we shall need to die."

MADAME DE LUZY

TO MARCEL PROUST

MADAME DE LUZY

(*From a manuscript dated September 15th, 1792.*)

I

AS I entered, Pauline de Luzy held out her hand to me. Then for a moment we remained silent. Her scarf and straw hat were thrown carelessly on an arm-chair.

The prayer from *Orpheus* was open on the spinet. Going towards the window, she watched the sun sinking to the blood-red horizon.

"Madam," I said at length, "do you remember the words you said two years ago this very day, at the foot of that hill on the bank of the river towards which at this moment your eyes are turned?

"Do you remember how, with your hand waving in a prophetic gesture, you called up before me, as in a vision, the coming days of trial, of crime and terror? On my very lips you arrested my confession of love, and bade me live and labour for justice and liberty. Madame, since your hand, which I could not anoint with kisses and tears enough, pointed out the way to me, I have pursued it un-

faltering. I have obeyed you; I have written and spoken for the cause. For two years I have withstood the blunder-headed starvelings who are the source of dissension and hate, the demagogues who seduce the people by violent demonstrations of pretended sympathy, and the poltroons who do homage to the coming powers."

She stopped me with a motion of her hand, and made a sign to me to listen. Then we heard borne across the scented spaces of the garden, where birds were warbling, distant cries of "Death!" "To the gallows with the aristocrat!" "Set his head on a pike!"

Pale and motionless she held a finger to her lips.

"It is," I said, "some unhappy wretch being pursued. They are making domiciliary visits and effecting arrests in Paris night and day. It is possible they may force an entrance here. I ought to withdraw for fear of compromising you. Although I am but little known in this neighbourhood, I am, as times go, a dangerous guest."

"Stay!" she adjured me.

For the second time cries rent the calm evening air. They were mingled now with the tramp of feet and the noise of fire-arms. They came nearer; then we heard a voice shout: "Close the approaches, so that he cannot escape, the scoundrel!"

Madame de Luzy seemed to grow calmer in proportion to the increasing nearness of the danger.

"Let us go up to the second floor," she said; "we shall be able to see through the sunblinds what is going on outside."

But scarcely had we opened the door when, on the landing, we beheld a half-dressed fugitive, his face blanched with terror, his teeth chattering and his knees knocking together. This apparition murmured in a strangled voice—

"Save me! Hide me! They are there. . . . They burst open my gate—overran my garden. They are coming. . . ."

II

MADAME DE LUZY, recognizing Planchonnet, the old philosopher who occupied the neighbouring house, asked him in a whisper—

"Has my cook caught sight of you? She is a Jacobin!"

"Nobody has set eyes on me."

"God be praised, neighbour!"

She led him into her bedroom, whither I followed them. A consultation was necessary. Some hiding-place must be hit upon where she could keep Planchonnet concealed for several days, or at least for several hours, whatever time it might take to deceive and tire out the search party. It was agreed that I should keep the approaches under observation, and that when I gave the signal, the unfortunate man should make his escape by the little garden gate.

Whilst he waited, he was unable to remain standing. He was completely paralysed with terror.

He endeavoured to make us understand that he was being hounded down for having conspired

with Monsieur de Cazotte against the Constitution, and for having on the 10th of August formed one of the defenders of the Tuileries—he, the enemy of priests and kings. It was an infamous calumny. The truth was that Lubin was venting his hate upon him—Lubin, hitherto his butcher, whom he had a hundred times had a mind to lay a stick about to teach him to give better weight, and who was now presiding over the section in which he had formerly been a mere stallholder.

As he uttered the name in strangled tones, he was persuaded that he actually saw Lubin, and hid his face in his hands. And of a truth there was the sound of footsteps on the stairs. Madame de Luzy shot the bolts and pushed the old man behind a screen. There was a hammering at the door, and Pauline recognized the voice of her cook, who called out to her to open, that the municipal officers were at the gate with the National Guard, and that they had come to make an inspection of the premises.

"They say," the woman added, "that Planchonnet is in the house. I know very well that it is not so, of course. I know you would never harbour a scoundrel of that sort; but they won't believe my word."

"Well, well, let them come up," replied Madame

de Luzy through the door. "Let them go all over the house, from cellar to garret."

As he listened to this dialogue, the wretched Planchonnet fainted behind the screen, and I had a good deal of trouble in resuscitating him by sprinkling water on his temples. When I had succeeded—

"My friend," the young woman whispered to her old neighbour, "trust in me. Remember that women are resourceful."

Then, calmly, as though she had been engaged in some daily domestic duty, she drew her bedstead a little out from its alcove, took off the bedclothes, and with my assistance so arranged the three mattresses as to contrive a space next the wall between the highest and the lowest of them.

Whilst she was making these arrangements, a loud noise of shoes, sabots, gunstocks, and raucous voices broke out on the staircase. This was for all three of us a terrible moment; but the noise ascended by little and little to the floor above our heads. We realized that the searchers, under the guidance of the Jacobin cook, were ransacking the garrets first. The ceiling cracked; threats and coarse laughter were audible, and the sound of kicks and bayonet-thrusts against the wainscot. We breathed again, but there was not a second to lose.

I helped Planchonnet to slip into the space contrived for him between the mattresses.

As she watched our efforts, Madame de Luzy shook her head. The bed thus disturbed had a suspicious appearance.

She endeavoured to give it a finishing touch; but in vain, she could not make it look natural.

"I shall have to go to bed myself," she said.

She looked at the clock; it was exactly seven, and she felt that it would look extraordinary for her to be in bed so early. As to feigning illness, it was useless to think of it: the Jacobin cook would detect the ruse.

She remained thoughtful for some seconds; then calmly, simply, with royal unconcern, she undressed before me, got into bed, and ordered me to take off my shoes, my coat, and my cravat.

"There is nothing for it but for you to be my lover, and for them to surprise us together. When they arrive you will not have had time to rearrange your disordered clothes. You will open the door to them in your vest,[1] with your hair rumpled."

All our arrangements were made when the search

[1] The vest was worn under the coat. It was a sort of waistcoat, longer than ours, and provided with sleeves of full length. (AUTHOR.)

party, with many exclamations of *"Sacré!"* and *"Peste!"* descended from the garrets.

The unfortunate Planchonnet was seized with such a paroxysm of trembling that he shook the whole bed.

Moreover, his breathing grew so stertorous that it must have been almost audible in the corridor.

"It's a pity," murmured Madame de Luzy. "I was so satisfied with my little artifice. But never mind; we won't despair. May God be our aid!"

A heavy fist shook the door.

"Who knocks?" Pauline inquired.

"The representatives of the Nation."

"Can't you wait a minute?"

"Open, or we shall break the door down!"

"Go and open the door, my friend."

Suddenly, by a sort of miracle, Planchonnet ceased to tremble and gasp.

III

UBIN was the first to enter. He had his scarf round him, and was followed by a dozen men armed with pikes. Casting his eyes first on Madame de Luzy and then on me—

"*Peste!*" he exclaimed. "It seems we are disturbing a pair of lovers. Excuse us, pretty one!"

Then turning to his followers, he remarked—

"The *sans-culottes* are the only folks who know how to behave."

But despite his theories this encounter had evidently put him in good spirits.

He sat down on the bed, and raising the chin of the lovely high-bred woman, said—

"It is plain that that pretty mouth wasn't made to mumble paternosters day and night. It would have been a pity if it were. But the Republic before all things. We are seeking the traitor, Planchonnet. He is here, I'm certain of it. I must have him. I shall get him guillotined. It will make my fortune."

"Search for him, then!"

They looked under the chairs and tables, in the cupboards, thrust their pikes under the bed, and probed the mattresses with their bayonets.

Lubin scratched his ear and looked at me slily. Madame de Luzy, dreading that I might be subjected to an embarrassing catechism, said—

"Dear friend, you know the house as well as I do myself. Take the keys and show Monsieur Lubin all over it. I am sure you will be delighted to act as guide to such patriots."

I led them to the cellars, where they turned over the piles of faggots, and drank a fairly large number of bottles of wine; after which Lubin staved in the full casks with the butt end of his gun, and leaving the cellar flooded with wine, gave the signal of departure. I conducted them out as far as the gate, which I shut on their very heels, and then ran back to let Madame de Luzy know that we were out of danger.

When she heard this, she bent her head over the side of the bed next the wall, and called—

"Monsieur Planchonnet! Monsieur Planchonnet!"

A faint sigh was the response.

"God be praised!" she exclaimed. "Monsieur Planchonnet, you occasioned me the most appalling fear. I thought you were dead."

Then turning towards me—

"My poor friend, you used to take so much delight in declaring, from time to time, that you loved me; you will never tell me so again!"

THE BOON OF DEATH BESTOWED

TO ALBERT TOURNIER

THE BOON OF DEATH BESTOWED

HEN he had for a long while tramped through the deserted streets, André at last went and sat down on the bank of the Seine and watched the water lapping the base of the hill where, in the vanished days of joy and hope, Lucie, his dear mistress, had her home.

For long enough he had not felt so restful.

At eight o'clock he took a bath. Then he strolled into a restaurant in the Palais Royal, and glanced through the newspapers whilst his meal was preparing. In the *Courier of Equality* he read the list of the condemned prisoners who had been executed on the Place de la Révolution on the 24th of Floréal.

He ate his breakfast heartily. Then he rose, looked in a glass to make sure that he was presentably dressed, and that his colour was not likely to betray him, and set out at an easy pace to the other side of the river towards the low house at the corner of the Rue de Seine and the Rue Mazarine. Here were the quarters of Citizen Lardillon, deputy

public prosecutor at the revolutionary tribunal, a man well disposed towards André, who had known him first as a Capuchin at Angers, and later as a *sans-culotte* in Paris.

He rang, and after an interval of some few minutes, a figure appeared behind a grating commanding the entrance, and Citizen Lardillon, having prudently satisfied himself as to the appearance and name of his visitor, at length threw open the door. His face was broad, his colour high, his eyes glittering, his lips moist, and his ears red. He looked a jovial but worried man. He led André into his ante-chamber.

There, on a small round table, a meal for two was set out. There was a chicken, a pie, a ham, a terrine of foie-gras and various cold meats in aspic. On the floor six bottles were cooling in a pail. A pineapple, cheese of various kinds, and preserved fruits occupied the mantelpiece, and flasks of liqueurs were deposited on a desk littered with papers.

Through the half-open door of the adjoining room a large bed was visible, not yet made.

"Citizen Lardillon," began André, "I have come to beg a favour of you."

"I am quite ready to grant it, citizen, provided it involves no risk to the security of the Republic."

André smilingly replied—

"The service I ask you to do me is not in the least compromising to the safety of either the Republic or yourself."

At a sign from Lardillon, André sat down. "Citizen deputy," he said, "you are aware that for the last two years I have been conspiring against your friends, and that I am the author of the pamphlet entitled, *The Altars of Fear.* You will not be doing me a favour in having me arrested. You will only be doing your duty. Moreover, that is not the service I ask at your hands. But listen: my mistress, to whom I am devoted, is in prison."

Lardillon nodded his head to indicate that he approved of the devotion André confessed to.

"I am sure that you are not unfeeling, Citizen Lardillon. I beg you to procure my reunion with the woman I love, and to have me conveyed to Port Libre as speedily as may be."

"Come, come," said Lardillon, and a smile played upon his lips, which were both delicate and firm, "it is a greater boon than life that you demand of me. You require me to bestow happiness on you, citizen!"

He stretched out the arm nearest to the bedroom, and called—

"Epicharis! Epicharis!"

A big, dark woman entered, her arms and throat still bare, for she had only got as far with her *toilette* as a chemise and petticoat, though a cockade was fastened in her hair.

"Nymph of mine," said Lardillon as he drew her on to his knees, "look upon the face of this citizen, and never forget it! Like us, Epicharis, he is tender-hearted; like us, he realizes that the greatest of ills is to be separated from the beloved one. He wishes to go to prison—ay, to the guillotine—with his mistress, Epicharis. Can I withhold this boon from him?"

"No!" answered the girl, as she tapped the cheeks of the carmagnole-clad monk.

"You are right, my goddess. We shall be earning the gratitude of two devoted lovers. Citizen Germain, give me your address, and this very night you shall sleep in the Bourbe."

"That is agreed?" said André.

"That is agreed," replied Lardillon as he offered him his hand. "Go and find your fair friend, and tell her how you saw Epicharis in Lardillon's embrace. I trust that that recollection may stir your hearts to joyous measures."

André replied that possibly they would be able to call up even more affecting memories, but that he was none the less grateful to Lardillon, and that

he only regretted that it was not likely to be in his power to be of service to him in return.

"A humane action needs no recompense," replied Lardillon.

Then he rose, and clasping Epicharis to his heart, said—

"Who knows when our own turn may come?"

Omnes eodem cogimur: omnium
Versatur urna; serius ocius
Sors exitura, et nos in æternum
Exilium impositura cymbæ.[1]

"In the meanwhile, let us drink! Citizen, will you join us at table?"

Epicharis said it would only be polite of him, and made to seize him by the arm. But he tore himself away, relying on the promise the deputy public prosecutor had made.

[1] We all must tread the paths of Fate,
And ever shakes the mortal Urn,
Whose Lot embarks us, soon or late,
On Charon's Boat, ah! never to return.
FRANCIS'S *Horace.*

A TALE OF THE MONTH OF FLORÉAL IN THE YEAR II

TO MADEMOISELLE JEANNE CANTEL

A TALE OF THE MONTH OF FLORÉAL IN THE YEAR II

I

HE turnkey had shut the door of the house of detention upon her who was formerly known as the Comtesse Fanny d'Avernay, whose arrest is described in the goal register as a step taken "in the interests of public safety," though her actual crime was that she had given shelter to enemies of the Government.

And now she is actually within the venerable edifice in which, once upon a time, the recluses of Port Royal indulged their craving for solitude and community life combined, and out of which it was easy to contrive a prison without making any structural change.

Seated on a bench whilst the registrar enters her name, she thinks—

"Ah, God, why are these things permitted; and what more do You demand of me?"

The turnkey's aspect is rather surly than evil, and his daughter, who is pretty, looks enchanting.

in her white cap, with cockade and knot of ribbons in the national colours. By this turnkey Fanny is conducted to a large courtyard, in the middle of which grows a fine acacia. There she will wait till he has prepared a bed and a table for her in a room which already contains five or six prisoners, for the house is crowded. Vainly each day is the overplus of tenants led to the revolutionary tribunal and the guillotine. Each day anew the committees fill up the gaps thus created.

In the courtyard Fanny catches sight of a young woman busy cutting a device of initials on the bark of the tree, and at once recognizes Antoinette d'Auriac, a friend of her childhood.

"What, you here, Antoinette?"

"And you, Fanny? Get them to put your bed by the side of mine. We shall have countless things to tell one another."

"Yes, numbers of things. . . . And Monsieur d'Auriac, Antoinette?"

"My husband? Upon my word, my dear, I had rather forgotten him. It is unfair on my part. To me he has always been irreproachable. . . . I fancy that at the present moment he is in prison somewhere or other."

"And what were you doing just now, Antoinette?"

"Pooh! . . . What o'clock is it? If it's five, the friend whose name I was interlacing on the bark there with my own has ceased to exist, for at midday he was haled away to the revolutionary tribunal. His name was Gesrin, and he was a volunteer in the army of the North. I made his acquaintance here in the prison. We passed some agreeable hours together at the foot of this tree. He was a worthy young fellow. . . . But I must set about making you feel at home, my dear."

And seizing Fanny by the waist, she carried her off to the room where she herself slept, and obtained the turnkey's promise not to part her from her friend.

They decided that the following morning they would join forces in washing the floor of their room.

The evening meal, meagrely provided by a patriotic eating-house keeper, was served in common. Each prisoner brought his plate and his wooden cover (metal covers were not allowed), and received his portion of pork and cabbage. At that coarse repast Fanny met women whose gaiety astonished her. As in the case of Madame d'Auriac, their headdresses were scrupulously arranged and they wore unimpeachable costumes. Though death was in sight, they had not lost the

womanly desire to please. Their conversation was as gallant as their persons, and Fanny was soon abreast of the love affairs which were knit and unknit in these gloomy courtyards where death lent a keener edge to love. Then, overcome with an indescribable agitation, she was seized with a great longing to clasp another hand in her own.

She called to mind the man who loved her, to whom she had never yielded herself, and a pang of regret, cruel as remorse, rent her heart. Tears as scalding as tears of passion coursed down her cheeks. By the light of the smoky lamp which lit up the table she took note of her companions, whose eyes glittered with fever, and she thought—

"We are condemned to die, all of us. How is it that I am sad and perturbed in spirit, whilst for these women life and death are equally a matter of no concern?"

And all night she wept upon her pallet.

II

TWENTY long monotonous days have passed heavily by. The courtyard where the lovers were wont to go in search of quiet and shade is deserted this evening. Fanny, stifled in the moist air of the corridors, has just sat down on the mound of turf which encircles the base of the old acacia that gives the courtyard its shade. The acacia is in flower, and the breeze passing through its branches emerges charged with the heavy perfume. Fanny catches sight of a scrap of paper fastened to the bark of the tree underneath the device which Antoinette traced there. On this paper she reads some verses by the poet Vigée, like herself a prisoner.

Here hearts from taint of treason free,
Calm victims were of calumny.
Thanks to the shade outspread above
They banished grief in dreams of love.
It heard their sighs and tender fears,
They oft bedewed it with their tears.
You, whom a time less menacing

Shall to this bare enclosure bring,
Spare yet awhile the kindly tree
Which anguish quelled, and strength upheld,
And half bestowed felicity.[1]

After reading these lines, Fanny relapsed into a thoughtful mood. She mentally reviewed her life, calm and even, her loveless marriage, the state of her own mind, interested in music and poetry, inclined to friendship, sober, untroubled; and then she thought of the love lavished on her by a gallant gentleman, which had wrapped her in its protective folds, yet been accepted unresponsively, as she was better able to realize in the silence of her prison. And, recognizing that she was about to die, she broke down. A sweat of mortal agony rose to her forehead. In her anguish she raised her burning eyes to the star-strewn sky, and wringing her hands murmured—

[1] Ici des cœurs exempts de crimes,
Du soupçon, dociles victimes,
Grâce aux rameaux d'un arbre protecteur,
En songeant à l'amour oubliaient leur douleur.
Il fut le confident de leurs tendres alarmes;
Plus d'une fois il fut baigné de larmes.
Vous, que des temps moins vigoureux
Améneront dans cette enceinte,
Respectez, protégez cet arbre généreux.
Il consolait la peine, il rassurait la crainte,
Sous son feuillage on fut heureux.

"Ah, God, give back to me one little gleam of hope!"

At this moment a light footstep approached. It was Rosine, the turnkey's daughter, coming for a surreptitious talk with her.

"Citizeness," the pretty girl said to her, "tomorrow evening a man who loves you will be waiting on the Avenue de l'Observatoire with a carriage. Take this parcel; it contains clothes like those I am wearing; during supper you will put them on in your bedroom. You are of the same height and fair colouring as myself. In the dusk we might easily be taken one for the other. A warder who is in love with me, and who has engaged in the plot with us, will come up to your room and bring you the basket which I take when I go marketing.

"With him you will descend the staircase (of which he carries a key) leading to my father's lodge. On that side of the prison the outer gate is neither locked nor guarded. You will only have to avoid being seen by my father. My lover will place himself with his shoulder against the little window of the lodge and say, as if he were talking to me: 'Au revoir, Citizeness Rose, and don't be so mischievous!' You will then go quietly into the street. Whilst this is going on I shall leave by the main

gate, and we shall join one another in the carriage which is to carry us away."

As she listened to these words, Fanny drank in the breath of spring and reawakening nature. With the whole energy of her being, palpitating with life, she longed for liberty. She could perceive, could taste the safety that was within her grasp. And as into the same draught was distilled an aroma of love, she clasped her hands on her breast to restrain her happiness. But, little by little, consideration, a powerful factor in her character, got the better of sentiment. She gazed steadily on the turnkey's daughter, and said—

"Why is it, dear child, that you are prepared to devote yourself in this way to the interests of one whom you scarcely know?"

"Oh," replied Rose, this time forgetting to use the familiar form of speech she had been employing hitherto, "it's because your kind friend will give me a large sum of money as soon as you are free, and then I shall be able to marry Florentin, my lover. You see, citizeness, that I am working entirely in my own interests. But I am better pleased to be the means of rescuing you than one of the others."

"I thank you for that, my child, but why the preference?"

"Because you are so dainty, and your good friend must be so weary of being separated from you. It is agreed, isn't it?"

Fanny stretched out her hand to take the parcel of clothes Rose was offering her.

But immediately afterwards she drew it back.

"Rose, do you realize that if we are discovered it would mean death to you?"

"Death!" exclaimed the young girl. "You terrify me. Oh, no, I didn't know that!"

Then, as quickly reassured—

"But, citizeness, your kind friend would manage to hide me."

"There isn't a spot in Paris that would prove a safe hiding-place. I thank you for your devotion, Rose; but I can't take advantage of it."

Rose stood as if thunderstruck.

"But you will be guillotined, citizeness, and I shall not be able to marry Florentin!"

"Be easy, Rose. I can do you a service although I can't accept what you offer."

"Oh, no, no! It would be cheating you out of your money."

The turnkey's daughter begged and prayed and wept for long enough. She went on her knees and raised the hem of Fanny's skirt.

Fanny gently pushed the girl's hand away and

turned her head aside. A moonbeam displayed the peacefulness of the fair face.

It was a lovely night, and a light breeze was moving. The prisoners' tree shook its perfumed branches and scattered its wan flowers upon the head of the voluntary victim.

THE LITTLE LEADEN SOLDIER

TO MADAME GASTON MEYER

THE LITTLE LEADEN SOLDIER

HAT particular night the fever induced by influenza prevented me from sleeping, and presently I heard very distinctly three smart taps on the glass door of a cabinet at the side of my bed, a cabinet in which I kept in an inextricable medley little figures in Dresden china or biscuit of Sèvres, terra-cotta statuettes from Tanagra or Myrina, little Renaissance bronzes, Japanese ivory carvings, Venetian glass, Chinese cups, boxes in Vernis Martin, lacquer trays, enamel caskets—in fact, a thousand nothings which a kind of fetish worship causes one to treasure, and which have the power of reviving memories of bygone hours, both gay and melancholy. The taps were faint but perfectly unmistakable, and by the light of the nightlight I perceived that they proceeded from a little leaden soldier installed amid the contents of the cabinet, who was making efforts to regain his liberty. He was successful, for soon beneath the weight of his fist the glazed door swung wide open. To tell the truth, I was not so surprised as

might be expected. To my mind that little soldier had always worn a suspicious appearance. And during the two years since Madame G. M.——had given him to me, I had been prepared for all sorts of impertinences from him. His uniform is blue turned up with red; he is a *Garde française,* and it is common knowledge that that regiment was not remarkable for discipline.

"Ho, there!" I called out. "What's your name, La Fleur, Brindamour, La Tulipe! can't you make less noise and let me sleep in peace? I am anything but well."

The rascal replied with a growl:

"I haven't changed much, my good man, since I took the Bastille, a hundred years back. On top of that a good many cans of good liquor were emptied. I doubt if many leaden soldiers of my age are still in existence. Good night to you. I am off to parade."

"La Tulipe," I replied with severity, "your regiment was disbanded by order of Louis XVI on the 31st of August, 1789. There is no longer any reason for you to attend parade. Stay where you are in the cabinet!"

La Tulipe twirled his moustache, and then, throwing a sly glance of contempt in my direction, retorted:

"What! do you mean to say you don't know that every year on the night of the 31st of December, when the children are asleep, our great review takes place, and the leaden soldiers march in procession over the roofs and between the chimneys still joyfully pouring forth the smoke arising from the dying embers of the Yule log? It's a desperate charge, and many a rider takes part in it with never a head on his shoulders. The shades of all the leaden soldiers who have fallen in battle pass by in the rage of combat. Nothing but bent bayonets and broken swords is to be seen. And the spirits of dead dolls, all ashen-faced in the moonbeams, watch them as they go by."

This harangue put me in a quandary.

"Come now, La Tulipe, you mean to say it is a custom, a solemn custom? I have the profoundest respect for all ancient customs and usages, traditions, legends, and popular beliefs. That is what we call folk-lore—a subject we find a great deal of amusement in studying. La Tulipe, it is a great satisfaction to me to learn that you are an observer of tradition. On the other hand, I am not at all sure that I ought to let you leave that cabinet."

"Indeed you ought," said a clear musical voice which I had not heard before, but which I instantly

recognized for that of the young woman from Tanagra, who, wrapped in the folds of her himation, occupied a place next to the *Garde française,* on whom she looked down from the graceful dignity of her superior stature. "Indeed you ought. All customs handed down to us by our ancestors are equally worthy of respect. Our fathers knew better than we what is permissible and what forbidden, for they were nearer to the gods. It is only proper, then, to allow this Galatian to perform the warlike rites of his ancestors. In my time they did not wear a ridiculous blue dress turned up with red like our friend here. Their only covering was their buckler. And we held them in great awe. They were barbarians. You yourself are just as much of a Galatian and barbarian. It is all in vain that you have read the poets and historians: you have no true conception of the beauty of life. You were not in the marketplace when I used to be spinning wool from Miletus in the courtyard of the house, under the old mulberry tree."

I compelled myself to answer with moderation—

"Lovely Pannychis, your insignificant Greek folk conceived certain forms so beautiful that the eyes and hearts of the judicious will never tire of them. But every day in your market-place such a quantity of drivel was babbled as would give occupation to

one of our municipal councils for a whole session. I have no regrets at never having been a citizen of Larissa or Tanagra. At the same time I admit that what you have said is reasonable. It is fitting that customs should be maintained, otherwise they would cease to be customs. Fair Pannychis, who didst spin wool from Miletus under the ancient mulberry tree, not in vain have you assailed my ears with words of good counsel; for on your advice I give La Tulipe permission to go whithersoever folk-lore may call him."

Then a little dairymaid in biscuit of Sèvres, her hands resting on her churn, turned towards me with glances of entreaty.

"Monsieur, do not let him go. He has promised to marry me. He falls in love with every woman he meets. If he goes, I shall never set eyes on him again."

And, hiding her plump cheeks in her apron, she began to weep uncontrollably.

La Tulipe had grown as red as the trimmings of his coat: he could not endure scenes, and he found it extremely distasteful to listen to reproaches which he had richly merited. I reassured my little dairymaid as well as I could, and begged my *Garde française* on no account to loiter about after the review in some Circe's grot. He promised, and I

said good-bye to him. But he made no attempt to start. It was extraordinary, but he remained perfectly still on his shelf, as motionless as the dainty trifles surrounding him. I let him perceive my surprise.

"Patience!" he exclaimed. "I cannot set out under your very eyes in that fashion, without infringing every law of the occult world. When you have gone to sleep I shall make off easily enough on a moonbeam, for I am full of expedients. But there is no great hurry, and I can still wait another hour or two. We have nothing better to amuse us than conversation. How would you like me to tell you some tale of days gone by? I know plenty such."

"Yes, tell us one," said Pannychis.

"Tell us one," said the dairymaid.

"Go ahead, then, La Tulipe," said I in my turn.

He sat down, filled his pipe, asked for a glass of beer, coughed, and began his tale with these words:—

THE LEADEN SOLDIER'S STORY

Ninety-nine years ago to the very day, I was standing on a round table with a dozen of my comrades, all of them as like me as if they had been my brothers. Some were standing, some lying

down, several had sustained injuries to the head or legs: we were the heroic remnant of a box of leaden soldiers bought the previous year at the fair of Saint Germain. The room was hung with pale blue silk. It contained a spinet with the Prayer from Orpheus open upon it, a few chairs with lyre-shaped backs, a lady's escritoire of mahogany, a white bed decked with roses; and all along the cornice were perched pairs of doves. Everything combined to convey an impression of affecting charm. The lamp diffused its soft light, and the flame on the hearth quivered like wings beating in the dusk. Clad in a dressing-gown, and seated in front of her escritoire, her delicate neck bending beneath the circling masses of her magnificent fair hair, Julie was turning over the letters tied up with ribbons, which had lain hidden in the drawers of the bureau.

Midnight strikes; the outward sign of the imaginary leap from one year to another. The dainty timepiece, on which is poised a laughing, golden Cupid, proclaims that the year 1793 has come to an end.

Just as the hands of the clock meet, a small phantom figure makes its appearance. Through a door which stands half open, a pretty child has crept out of the dressing-room, where he has his

bed, and run in his nightshirt to fling himself into his mother's arms and wish her a happy new year.

"A happy new year, Pierre? . . . Ah! thank you, thank you! But do you know what a happy year is?"

He thought he did; but, all the same, she wished to make quite sure that he knew.

"A year is happy, my darling, when it passes on its way bringing us neither hatreds nor fears."

She embraces him; then she carries him back to the bed he has escaped from, and then returns to her seat in front of the escritoire. She glances first at the flames leaping on the hearth, and then at the letters from which dried flowers are falling. It is heartrending to have to burn them. Yet it must be done. For these letters, if they were discovered, would consign to the guillotine both him who wrote them and her who received them. If it was only herself that was in danger, she would not burn them, so weary is she of her contest for life with the executioners. But she thinks of him, proscribed, denounced, pursued, hidden away in some garret at the other end of Paris. A single one of these letters would be enough to put his pursuers on his track and deliver him over to death.

Pierre is sleeping snugly in the neighbouring

dressing-room; the cook and Nanon have gone to their rooms in the upper regions. The intense silence of a snow-clad town reigns all around. The keen, clear air brightens the flame on the hearth. Julie has made up her mind to burn these letters, and it is a task she cannot carry out—how well she knows it!—without recalling events of the profoundest sadness. She will burn the letters, but not until she has read them through once again.

The letters are all arranged in succession, for Julie imparts to everything around her a measure of the orderliness which is natural to her.

These, already growing yellow, date from three years ago, and in the silence of the night Julie lives over again the magic hours. Not a single page is surrendered to the flames until she has conned it over at least ten times, syllable by treasured syllable.

The stillness all around her is unbroken. From time to time she goes to the window, raises the curtain, glances through the oppressive gloom at the tower of Saint Germain des Prés silvered by the moon, and then resumes her slow labours of pious destruction. Why should she not for the last time rejoice over these delicious pages? Why deliver to the flames these cherished lines ere she has for ever imprinted them on her heart. Still-

ness prevails everywhere, and her spirit leaps with youth and love.

She reads—

"Though absent, I behold you, Julie. I go on my way, surrounded by images which my mind conjures up. I behold you, not cold and unnerved, but alive, animated, ever changing, yet ever perfect. Around you in my dreams I gather the most gorgeous spectacles the world can yield. How happy is Julie's lover! He finds charms in all things, since in all things he finds her. In loving her it is life he loves; he marvels at this world which she irradiates; he treasures this earth which she adorns. Love unveils to him the hidden mystery of things. He apprehends the infinite forms of creation; they all display to him symbols of Julie; he hears the unnumbered voices of nature; they all murmur in his ear the name of Julie. He plunges his gaze rapturously into the inmost heart of the daylight, with the thought that that fortunate light bathes also the countenance of Julie, and casts as it were a divine caress on the loveliest of human forms. This evening the earliest stars will thrill his being; he will say: 'Perhaps at this very moment she too is gazing on them.' He inhales her in all the odours borne on the air. He desires to kiss the very ground she treads on. . . .

"My Julie, if I am fated to fall beneath the axe of the persecutor, and like Algernon Sidney to die for liberty, death itself will be unable to restrain my indignant ghost in the land of shades which holds not you. I shall fly to you, my beloved. Often will my spirit return to hover around you."

She reads and dreams. Night is coming to a close. Already a pallid light pierces the curtains: it is morning. The servants have begun their work. She must finish her own. Has she caught the sound of voices? No; all around her is silence, still. . . .

Yes, all around is silence, for the snow deadens the tramp of feet. They are coming; they halt outside. Blows fall heavily on the door.

She has not time to hide the letters, to close the escritoire. All she can do she does; she takes the papers in armfuls and throws them underneath the sofa, the valance of which touches the floor; a few letters are scattered on the carpet; she pushes them under with her foot, seizes a book, and flings herself into a chair.

The president of the district enters, followed by a dozen of his pikemen. He is an elderly chair-caner named Brochet, who shivers with ague, and whose bloodshot eyes roam in an unspeakably loathsome fashion.

He makes a sign to his men to keep guard over

the approaches, and then turning to Julie, announces—

"We have just received information, citizeness, that you are in correspondence with the agents of Pitt, and with *émigrés* and conspirators in the prisons. In the name of the law, I am here to take possession of your papers. It is now some time since you were pointed out to me as an aristocrat of the most dangerous type. Citizen Rapoix, whom you see before you" (here he indicated one of his followers), "has confessed that in the severe winter of 1789, you gave him both money and clothes with a view to corrupting him. Magistrates of a timid tendency and wanting in patriotism have shown you leniency over long. But I am master now, in my turn, and you shall not escape the guillotine. Deliver up your papers, citizeness!"

"Take them yourself," said Julie; "my escritoire is unlocked."

There still remained in the drawers certain certificates of births, marriages, and deaths, tradesmen's bills, and title-deeds, which one by one Brochet examined. He fumbled with them, and laid them aside with the suspicious air of a man who reads but poorly, and from time to time exclaimed: "Scandalous! The name of the so-called king is not effaced. Scandalous, scandalous, I call it!"

From his manner Julie concludes that his visit will be lengthy and scrupulous. She cannot resist taking a furtive glance at the side of the sofa, and she sees at once the corner of a letter peeping out from under the valance like the white ear of a cat. At this sight her agony vanishes suddenly. The certainty that she is lost brings back to her a quiet assurance, and her face takes on a calm indistinguishable from an expression of complete security. She has no doubt that the men will observe this scrap of paper so patent to her own eyes. Its whiteness on the red carpet positively screams at her. But she cannot guess whether they will discover it at once or whether some time must first elapse. This doubt occupies and distracts her mind. At this tragic moment she indulges in a sort of joke with herself as she watches the patriots moving further away from or nearer to the sofa.

Brochet, who has finished with the papers in the escritoire, becomes impatient, and declares that he will certainly find what he has come in search of.

He overthrows the furniture, turns the pictures round, and raps the panelling with the pommel of his sword to detect hiding-places. He can discover nothing. He smashes a panel of looking-glass to see if anything is concealed behind it. There is nothing.

Whilst this is going on his men raise some of the squares of parquet. They declare with oaths that a beggarly aristocrat is not going to have the laugh of honest *sans-culottes*. But never one of them espies the little white wisp which peeps from under the valance of the sofa.

They march Julie into the other rooms of the suite and demand all her keys. They burst open the cupboards, shiver the windows to splinters, smash up chairs, drag the stuffing from the upholstery and find nothing.

Still Brochet is not yet despondent; he returns to the bedroom.

"In God's name! the papers are here; I'm certain of it!"

He examines the sofa, declares that it has a suspicious appearance, probes it five or six times with his sword from end to end. Still he finds no traces of what he seeks, utters a horrible oath, and gives his men orders to depart.

He is already at the door, when, returning a step or two towards Julie, he raises his fist and shouts—

"Live in dread of my return! I am the sovereign people!"

And he goes out, last of all.

At length all are gone. She hears the clatter

of their tread grow fainter on the staircase. She is saved! Her imprudence has not betrayed him—him whom she loves! She runs, with a jubilant little laugh, to embrace the tiny Pierre, who is sleeping with his fists clenched, just as though everything round his cradle had not been turned upside down.

When he had finished his tale, La Tulipe relighted his pipe, which had gone out, and emptied his glass.

"My friend," I said, "justice is a virtue. For a *Garde française* it must be admitted that you are a finished story-teller. But I have a strong impression that I have already heard that story somewhere."

"It may be that Julie herself related it. She was a creature of infinite wit."

"And what became of her?"

"She knew some happy times in the days of the Consulate. Nevertheless, of an evening she would whisper sorrowful secrets to the trees in her park. You see, Monsieur, she was better armed against death than against love."

"And he who wrote such elegant letters?"

"He became a baron and prefect under the Empire."

"And little Pierre?"

"He died a colonel of *gendarmerie,* at Versailles, in 1859."

"The deuce he did!"

COUNT MORIN, DEPUTY

COUNT MORIN, DEPUTY

WAS still but a sort of over-grown schoolboy when Fontanet suddenly emerged into consequence by reason of his law degree, his precocious beard and his advanced opinions. It was in 1868. He lectured to members of the Junior Bar and even contributed satirical articles to the little Reviews of the Latin Quarter. While he was making himself known, his father was becoming a celebrity. That was an advantage of which my friend availed himself with the delightful alacrity that never forsook him. Though he saw me less often than formerly, his friendliness towards me suffered no abatement. For this I was greatly beholden to him. One morning we had the pleasure of walking through the Jardin du Luxembourg together. It was springtime, the sky was clear. The light that shone through the tender green of the fresh foliage was soft and pleasant to the eye. There was a sense of gladness in the air and I would fain have taken Love for my theme. But,

while the sparrows were twittering among the leaves and a pigeon rested with folded wing upon the shoulder of a statue, Fontanet held forth to me as follows:

"I have got a piece of good news for you: M. Veulet is about to enter on an active political career. We have at length prevailed on him to take this step. At the next election he will stand as an independent candidate for one of the districts in the department of the Seine-et-Marne. He is looking out for some one to act as his private secretary during the electoral campaign. It occurred to me that the position might suit you."

"I don't know," I answered, "whether I should be equal to the work."

"Oh," replied Fontanet, with that alluring grace which constitutes his great attraction, "if the position were one that required decision, initiative, energy, I should never have thought of suggesting you. I know you through and through and I realize that, though at bottom you are intelligent enough, you've no dash, no spontaneity about you."

"No," said I, "I have not."

"You lack quick-wittedness," he added.

"Quite right," I answered, "I do."

"You are a little heavy," he went on, "a little sleepy. And it would be wrong to judge you by

appearances as people usually do. But don't be afraid. When you are with M. Veulet, your work will be all cut and dried. You will only have to stick at it a bit."

Observing that, despite his efforts to reassure me, I was still rather inclined to hesitate, he added:

"Laisse-toi faire—Do as they ask you. It would smarten you up tremendously."

I have never experienced the smallest desire to be smartened up, but "laisser faire"—*that* always had an attractive sound about it. So "laisser faire" carried the day and it was arranged that I should go to the theatre that very night; that, on my arrival there, I should proceed straight up to Madame Fontanet's box, where, in addition to that estimable lady, I should find M. Fontanet senior, a president of the Bar, who would himself introduce me to M. Veulet.

"So," said I to Fontanet in order to get as much information as I could on the subject that was uppermost in my mind, "M. Veulet is really a man of note?"

"Oh," answered Fontanet, in a tone of conviction, "he's great!"

"I can quite believe it," I replied, for I had heard the same thing said about a number of people. "But what is he specially great at?"

With a shrug of his shoulders Fontanet told me I was asking ridiculous questions. That, too, I readily believed. My adverse critics have always commanded my respect.

Nevertheless he was good enough to add that M. Veulet had devoted his youth to the abolition of slavery.

"He has served," he said, "as a volunteer in both hemispheres. He fought in Peru under General Pezet against the Spaniards. He was at Pittsburg and the Siege of Corinth. He fought against the slave party under General Sherman in Liberia and under Stephen Allen Benson against the niggers in Palm Island. He fought at Warsaw under Langiewicz beside Mlle. Pustlowoitoff; in the Caucasus under Schamyl against the Russians, and single-handed against all comers on board a slave ship."

"Nothing could be finer," I exclaimed.

"Nothing save the gift of oratory," answered Fontanet.

In the evening I duly attended at the Théâtre Français. There I found M. Fontanet senior, who, between the acts, introduced me to M. Veulet in front of Voltaire's statue. M. Veulet was standing amidst a group of friends. On hearing my name he vouchsafed me a nod. He thought to

display his benevolence: I was conscious only of his superiority. I was so overcome that I went and hid myself behind his auditors. From there I contemplated him. He somehow suggested a river, and I took him to be rather more than fifty years of age. He was tallish and held his head erect. His beard conveyed the idea of genius and virtue, though it was really rather difficult at first to decide which of these impressions was the stronger. His skull was remarkable, but not on account of its size. It was, on the contrary, rather small, and pointed; but it looked so bare, so yellow and so shiny that, at the sight of it, one fell to thinking of the attrition it had so generously undergone in all the wars, expeditions and hardships which its owner had been through in the distant lands. It reflected the light so powerfully that it seemed all aglow, and one might be forgiven for doubting whether it was the gas jets which illumined it or whether there still played about it a few glorious rays from the scorching sun that had beaten down on this soldier-explorer in climes beyond the seas. The lines that wrinkled his forehead, though less becoming than one might have wished, were merged in the dazzling radiance of the cranium. The eyes were small and grey; but what imparted an extraordinary grandeur to the whole countenance was

the nose. By its astounding length it gave rise to all manner of vast and vague ideas. It was a nose that descended straight down between a pair of hollow cheeks till it reached a long white beard which adorned the whole physiognomy with that aspect of majestic repose which characterizes the Kings of antique legends and the bisons of the Missouri.

You may readily suppose that such a man presented a venerable appearance. His tall frame, spare yet robust, rested on two feet which, in another, might possibly have seemed flat, but which were encased in a pair of splendid warrior-like boots; truly heroic foot-gear.

As I listened, I heard him saying:

"Not a day passes but I receive newspapers from every country in the world, Albania, Herzegovina, Croatia, Bosnia, Transylvania, Barbary, Labrador, Maharashtra, and when I happen to notice among the general news that a miller belonging to Marburg has been drowned in the Drave or that a poor Sudra of Catmandou has been eaten by a tiger, my eyes fill with tears and I feel as though I were father, mother, wife and children all in one to these unhappy creatures."

At this point the bell went and interrupted his discourse.

"How splendid!" I murmured to myself as I returned to my seat.

Next day I was M. Veulet's secretary.

Shortly afterwards I was copying some addresses out of the directory when my worthy chief summoned me to his room. Hardly had I got inside the door when he began to give vent to raucous groans accompanied by a hideous contraction of all the muscles of his face. I was horribly scared.

"It's all right," he said kindly, seeing my alarm. "It's only rheumatics, the result of spending fourteen hours in a marsh in the Ukraine. It's complicated at the present moment with neuralgic pains caused by a bullet that hit me in the head when riding alone through a forest in Texas. But please don't worry about it. I don't."

And indeed he seemed not to suffer the least inconvenience from pains which a moment before had made him cry out as if he were on the rack.

"My young friend," said he, "you will soon be able to be of service to me. I have not yet said anything to you on the question of salary. It is both equitable and necessary that all work should have its reward. You've only got to say the word, just one word, and I will give you any amount you care to name. But if you take my advice you will

leave the whole thing to me. I promise you, you'll have no cause to regret it."

At those words I realized beyond any shadow of doubt that, unless I was a fool to myself, the most short-sighted and thick-headed creature that ever was, in short a colossal dunderhead, I had just got to put aside all idea of remuneration. I did so with a wave of the hand.

I had immediate occasion to congratulate myself on taking this course, for M. Veulet rewarded me with a smile full of promise which assured me that my fortune was made. Then he slowly unbuttoned his frock-coat, laid his hand on his heart, drew forth a cigar which was reposing upon it and offered it to me. It was a little cigar of quite an ordinary brand. But how true it is that the value of every gift depends upon the manner in which it is bestowed. M. Veulet proffered me this cigar with a gesture of such sweeping magnificence that I recognized at once he was awarding me a cigar of honour.

From that day onwards we devoted all our time and energies to our electoral area in the department of the Seine-et-Marne. To be quite frank, we hardly knew anything about it. M. Veulet, who had drunk of the waters of nearly every river in the world, had never stayed his steps by the banks of the

Marne. He deputed to me the task of studying the needs of the people whose votes we were about to canvass. I looked up the gazeteers and discovered that their occupations were manufacturing and agricultural. From this I inferred that they had need of sun and rain and that they required peace. My employer did not have it in his power to control the winds which bring the clouds together and scatter them again, but he was one of those fortunate beings who know how to hold out the symbolical olive branch to a grateful proletariat. He often alluded to the Brotherhood of Nations; "Take a flute," he said, "and go and play upon it in the woods; all creatures will draw near to you to listen; in the same way there is a harmony that draws the nations together; 'tis to this harmony that we must give ear." And I looked with admiration on this old warrior covered with scars, who longed for the peace of the world. He inscribed as watchwords on his election address:

"No more conscription; no more standing armies!"

Captious critics might perhaps have inquired by what process M. Veulet proposed to disarm our neighbours simultaneously with ourselves. But I was not a captious critic and my spirit was fulfilled of enthusiasm and hope.

While I was engaged in studying the needs of our constituents, M. Veulet was conferring with several advocates who formed a sort of Committee, his General Staff as it were. There were a dozen or fourteen of them who used to come and enlighten M. Veulet on certain matters appertaining to administrative jurisprudence. We had indeed a redoubtable official candidate against us; a man whose mandate, which had been several times renewed, and whose personal position rendered him a powerful opponent, to wit Comte Morin.

I had the pleasure of seeing among them M. Fontanet senior, who looked somewhat like a Roman with his bushy eyebrows, heavy cheeks and square chin. As he passed by he waved me a friendly greeting with his finger-tips, an act of condescension that flattered me the more because he was closely surrounded by a throng of confrères whose attention he was monopolizing. He certainly did not abuse the interest which attached to his pronouncements, for he never uttered more than four or five sentences at any one meeting; and of those he was accustomed to devote one to lauding the vanished glories of the Comédie-Française and expatiating on the talents and charms of the delicious Madame Allan.

"You never knew her, you fellows" he was wont to say to his young confrères.

And they would go away declaring "Fontanet is an artist to his finger-tips."

That caused me to look at his nails. They were square and embedded in his fingers, which were short and fat. His son frequently accompanied him. On each occasion he would ask me whether I was smartening up. That rather got on my nerves but he had a pleasant way of calling me "my lad" which made me quite happy. Then he would proceed to impart information.

"Well, that Comte Morin of yours has been up to some nice games. He has presented a banner to the Horticultural Association. What a cynical old humbug!"

I found it necessary to ask Fontanet to explain, and I did not give rein to my indignation until after I understood that this gift of a banner constituted a singularly unprincipled electioneering manœuvre.

However, our affairs were going on very satisfactorily. A group of electors requested M. Veulet in flattering terms to stand as their candidate.

M. Veulet replied as follows:

"It was my fondest hope to spend the remainder of my days in studious retirement. You have

decided otherwise. I hasten to respond to the appeal of the good folk who honour me with their confidence. There are grave moments in the political life of a country when to stand aside would be to desert her in her hour of need. You may count upon me."

The battle was joined. We had to carry on the fight. M. Veulet sent me to the chief town of the constituency as sub-editor of the *Independent,* the editor-in-chief of which was M. Saint-Florentin.

I murmured as I stepped into the railway carriage: "May I render good service to my dear, dear master and may I learn the needs of the inhabitants of the ——th electoral division of the department of the Seine-et-Marne."

As the train drew near my destination, I looked out of the carriage window. The silver waters of the river were gliding on between the willows, winding in gracious curves till they vanished from sight; but, long after the stream had been lost to view, you could divine its meanderings by the line of poplars which bordered it. A steeple and two towers, rising amid the trees, indicated the site of the town. Soon I perceived the boulevards and the beginning of the houses. The place seemed invested with an atmosphere of tranquil happiness. There it lay, small and gem-like beneath an azure

sky in which light, fleecy clouds floated motionless. The sight of it suggested repose and homely delights. Nevertheless I was going there to introduce political discord.

I inquired my way to the *Independent*. It was close to the station, in a little, low house covered with wistaria. I found M. Saint-Florentin in his office. He had taken off his coat and waistcoat and he was writing. He was a giant, and a giant of the most hirsute description I had ever encountered. He was as swarthy as a nigger. Every time he moved there was a sound as of rustling horsehair, and he had a sort of wild-beast scent about him. He did not cease writing; puffing and blowing, his chest bared to the air, he went on till he had finished his article. Not until then did he inquire of me what my business was. When I told him that M. Veulet had appointed me his sub-editor, he answered: "Quite so," and mopped his forehead. I asked him what my duties would be.

"Always the same old thing," was his reply.

I had to make a frank avowal of my complete ignorance of anything pertaining to journalism. So far from this telling against me, the confession called forth a sudden manifestation of generosity. He smiled upon me, extended his hand and asked me to dine with him and his family.

He gave me his address and added: "When you get there, ask for M. Planchonnet. That is my real name. Away from the office here we drop Saint-Florentin. It's Planchonnet out of business hours."

I make several attempts to lead the conversation round to the subject of M. Veulet's candidature, in which I was so greatly interested. He seemed, however, to regard the matter with marked coldness.

Nevertheless there was no coldness about his article. I read it that evening. What fiery eloquence! The banner presented to the Horticultural Association was the text of his fulminations. How forcibly did my editor-in-chief denounce such corrupt practices. He passed alternately from wrath to irony, from irony to wrath. Comte Morin was directly aimed at. The article pictured him as a redoubtable, resourceful and unprincipled antagonist, having recourse to subterranean manœuvres and exhibiting tireless energy, underhand activity, an ambition and a fanaticism that attained the proportions of genius.

"Well, anyhow," I said as I folded up the paper, "it's well to know something of the adversary."

As I had an hour to spend before going to my editor's house in response to his invitation, I went

for a stroll in a little wood a few hundred yards out of the town. It was a semi-wild cluster of hornbeams, maples, ash, limes and lilacs, a little bouquet that sang in the breeze. I thought it charming. I fell in love with it and I made up my mind to get to know every tree in it, to seek out its lowest plants, its coronillas and saxifrages, and to see whether there was not some Solomon's seal to be found growing in the shade of the big trees. I had already wandered through it in two or three different directions, when my eye lighted on an old man sitting on a seat on which he had deposited his hat, his handkerchief and two or three bottles of medicine.

His face was long and pallid, a few wisps of grey hair hung over his forehead, his eyes were sad and his mouth drooped mournfully. He had a skipping rope in his hand and was looking fixedly at a little girl of five who was sticking twigs into the sandy bed of a dried-up rivulet. The child's dress was of lace. Every now and then she would gaze up at the old man with her big dark-rimmed eyes. When she had finished arranging her little garden she smiled with her pale lips. Then I saw the old man brush aside a tear as he turned his face away. I concealed myself in order to observe him the more closely, and I perceived that he was afflicted with

illness rather than with age. He was elegantly dressed, but his movements were strained and painful. Clearly paralysis had affected his limbs and laid to sleep in his brain everything save his love for this little sick child who was playing in the sand beside him.

Though there was nothing extraordinary about this encounter, it made a deep and painful impression upon me. What I thought I read in the expression of this sad and suffering countenance seemed to teach me how vain and futile are our quarrels and our ambitions in the face of Destiny. "That man," said I to myself, "has no part in our disputes. Electors have no interest for him and suffering which exalts him far above us vouchsafes him a terrible exemption from our petty trials and vexations."

Pondering these things in my mind, I found myself at the abode of my editor. I discovered him in his drawing-room with two or three children on his knees and some more on his shoulders; he even had some in his pockets. They were shouting "Papa" at him and tugging at his beard. He was a different man. He had on a new frock-coat and a white shirt, and he smelt of lavender. But what altered the man beyond recognition, was his

air of kindliness and contentment. The room was full of flowers and as gay as he.

A woman now entered. She was pale and delicate looking, but, though her figure was ruined, her pale gold hair and eyes of watchet blue gave her a not unprepossessing appearance.

"Let me introduce you to Madame Planchonnet," he said.

He seemed proud of his wife and, really, she was very good to look upon; I should never have thought that a man made after the fashion of my editor-in-chief would have been able to present so charming a spouse.

Her style of dress delighted me. It was light in colour and texture, but that is all I can tell you about it. In those days I was quite unable to analyse a woman's dress or clearly to distinguish her raiment from her person. I can do so now and I derive no pleasure from the skill. Madame Planchonnet shed her charm around her and I perceived that the house reflected the orderliness of her mind and the graciousness of her thoughts. Not that it had any attractiveness in itself with its ungainly woodwork and the great, clumsy beams that stretched across the ceilings. Nor was it expensively furnished for, naturally, luxurious and abun-

dant furniture was hardly to be expected in the household of a wandering journalist like my editor-in-chief. But draperies daintily disposed, some artistic pottery and a few flowers and leaf sprays made a pleasant ensemble for the eye to rest upon. The children (of whom I now perceived there were but five) were big and rough and florid, though fine enough specimens of their kind. Their bare arms and legs formed about their sire a sort of lavish framework of flesh, softened by a golden down, and they all fell to staring at me in silence like so many little wild things. Madame Planchonnet apologized for their rudeness.

"We never stop long in one place and they don't have time to become acquainted with anyone. They are little savages; they know nothing. How can they be expected to learn, when we move into fresh rooms every six months? Henri, the eldest, is over eleven. He doesn't know a word of his catechism yet, and how in the world we are to get him to make his first communion I don't know. Your arm, Monsieur."

The dinner was abundant. A young country wench, acting under the vigilant control of Madame Planchonnet, kept bringing in dish after dish of game and poultry which my host, a napkin tucked under his chin, a three pronged fork in one hand

and a carving-knife with a stag-horn handle in the other, ordered to be placed before him, displaying all his white teeth and rolling terrifying eyes in the midst of his hairy visage. His nostrils dilated at the savoury odour of the viands. Sticking out his elbows, he carved away at his poultry and game, giving thumping platefuls to his children, his wife and his guest, and displaying a prodigious love of eating. His aspect was terrible, contented and kind. He delivered himself of perfectly harmless observations accompanied with gusts of frightful laughter. But it was when pouring out the wine that he manifested, in all their luxuriant magnificence, the characteristics of the good-humoured ogre. Reaching down with his huge arms and without bending his body, he would pull up by the neck one after another of the many bottles that stood ranged at his feet and poured out bumpers for his wife, who protested in vain, for his children, who had already fallen asleep with one cheek in their plate, and for me, hapless one! who gulped down, without giving myself time to taste it, red wine, pink wine, white wine, amber wine and golden wine whose age and vintage he proclaimed in ringing, jovial tones. We thus emptied a number of bottles of divers brands; how many I haven't a notion. After that I expressed to my hostess sen-

timents at once exalted and tender. All that was heroic and amorous in my heart came thronging to my lips. I raised the conversation to the region of the sublime; but I experienced a very real difficulty in maintaining it at that level, because, although Monsieur Planchonnet nodded approval of my most transcendent flights, he did not follow them up, but kept firing off observations concerning the gathering and preparation of edible fungi or some other culinary topic. He carried a complete cookery book in his head and a quite useful gastronomical survey of France. Now and then he told stories illustrating the precocity of his offspring.

With the dessert came the consciousness that I loved Madame Planchonnet. So pure and so generous was this passion that, far from smothering it in my bosom, I gave it overt expression in lingering looks and philosophic disquisitions. I unfolded my views on Life and Death. I had still much to say to Madame Planchonnet when she left us to put the children to bed. They had all fallen sound to sleep in their chairs with their legs up in the air. Her departure left me grave and thoughtful, seated opposite Planchonnet who went on everlastingly pouring out liqueurs. I prayed that he might have a noble soul, and I one nobler still, in order

that Madame Planchonnet might be loved by two men worthy of her. Therefore I resolved to sound the heart of Planchonnet.

"Monsieur Planchonnet," I said, "that was a powerful article you wrote showing up Comte Morin's manœuvres."

"Oh, you mean the bit of flap-doodle in this morning's issue!"

"Flap-doodle," said I to myself. "H'm, that must be a technical or professional expression."

"Monsieur Planchonnet," I continued, "what sort of a man is this Comte Morin?"

"Don't know him; never saw him. They say he's a pretty good-natured old dodderer."

Observing a look of surprise on my face, he added:

"I don't know anyone here. Three months ago I was still at Gap. It was Veulet's committee who asked me if I would like to come here and give Morin a fall. And here I am. What about a drop of anisette, eh?"

An immense desire to love filled my bosom. I began to feel a great affection for Planchonnet. I was familiar, interested and confidential; above all confidential.

At length, seeing that he was dropping off into

a doze, I got up, wished him good night and expressed a desire to pay my respects to Madame Planchonnet.

That, he gave me to understand, I could not do because she was in bed. I said how sorry I was and looked about for my hat, which I had much ado to find. Planchonnet came with me to the top of the stairs and imparted, concerning the manner of holding on to the balusters and negotiating the stairs, advice not commonly bestowed on departing guests. But the staircase was apparently a difficult one, for I sat down on it at least twice. Planchonnet asked me whether I could get back to my hotel. I considered the question offensive. I told him I was certain I should find it all right; wherein I spoke rashly, for I spent half the night looking for it, although it was in the same street as my host's house. During my search I noted how difficult it occasionally is not to put both feet in the gutter at once. The most fantastic ideas were crowding pell-mell into my head and, though I had made up my mind to perform forthwith some striking deed before the very eyes of Madame Planchonnet, I could not decide in my own mind what form and nature that deed was to take.

When I awoke next day, the sun was high in the heavens. My tongue was parched, my skin

burning hot. These symptoms made it quite clear to me that I had been abominably drunk the night before. But what worried me most was that I could not remember what I had said to Madame Planchonnet during dinner. As I had good grounds for thinking it was a lot of nonsense, I had not the courage to put in another appearance at the *Independent*.

With my heart filled with shame and despondency, I went and lay me down in my little wood and there, all alone, lying flat on the grass, my eyes gazing heavenwards and watching the silvery leaves of a young poplar a-sparkle in the breeze, I received the mute consolations of nature and forgave myself for my shortcomings.

I conceived the hope that Madame Planchonnet would make allowance for my youth and that I had not irrevocably forfeited the sympathetic regard of the delicate soul which I had discerned in her deep blue eyes. This hope was the greatest comfort to me and I should have inclined to unqualified optimism if Madame Planchonnet's figure had been as pretty as her eyes.

I was thus endeavouring to adjust my relations with life, when I heard a child crying. I went in the direction of the sound and saw the little invalid girl I had encountered the day before. While

she wept, the same old man who was with her on the former occasion, was gazing up in despair at the topmost branches of a tall elm. Blank dismay was depicted on his countenance. His poor old arms were beating the air and his knees were trembling. He was certainly the victim of a dilemma with which it was beyond his power to cope.

"There . . there . . there . . ." he kept saying.

On my offering to do what I could to assist him, he explained in hesitating and embarrassed tones that the ball with which his little girl had been playing had lodged in a tree and that the walking stick he had thrown up to bring it down had also got entangled in the branches. He was at his wit's end.

The little girl, ceasing to cry, turned towards me. I looked at them both and saw that they resembled each other. Their features were large and finely chiselled and, beneath the imprint of suffering, retained a hint of something at once attractive and rare.

The first thing to be done was to help them. I looked about to see if I could discover the branches on which the stick and the ball had caught.

"There . . there . . there . ." the old man kept repeating, stretching forth a palsied arm which, refusing obedience to its owner, pointed

tremulously in all directions. The effort put him in a bath of perspiration.

I discovered by myself what I was looking for, and, by throwing a stone up into the tree, I soon managed to bring down the ball. The old man saw it fall with childish glee.

The walking stick, which was hardly visible from below, was not to be got at by means of a stone, so I decided to climb the tree. With wandering words and wandering wits the old man begged and prayed that I would do nothing of the sort. It was enough, he said, that the little girl had recovered her ball and had ceased to cry. But I was conscious of a feeling of indomitable energy. It was the first effect of my love for Madame Planchonnet. I swung up from branch to branch with an agility of which I never dreamt myself the possessor and seized hold of the stick. I then observed that it was adorned with a gold knob and a ring of turquoise. I handed it to the old man and then hurried away in order to spare him the trouble of thanking me a second time. My ideas had changed colour. I went back with a stout heart to the office of the *Independent*.

There I found Planchonnet half stripped, sweating, puffing and blowing, his eyes starting from his head, his tongue out and his beard dripping with

foaming beer. Three empty tankards were ranged about him. His pen grasped firmly in his clenched fist, he was writing a fresh article on the doings of Comte Morin and it was obvious from the way he addressed himself to the task that he had a big thing on hand. I myself carried the sheets to the composing room as he completed them.

It was in truth a big thing. This time it had to do with umbrellas presented by Comte Morin to the market dames. This act alone roused Planchonnet's indignation to such a pitch that his previous article, which I had thought so violent, seemed weak and timid in comparison. I complimented him on the production. He seemed flattered and replied:

"I'll tell you about it. As I was going through the market this morning to buy a melon—for when it's a case of choosing a melon or a pheasant women are absolutely useless: only a man is any good at buying fruit and game—in passing along the stalls, I observed that the women had all got brand-new red umbrellas. I remarked on the fact to a butter-woman who told me that, from time immemorial, the 'Big House' had always presented the market women, at this time of the year, with new umbrellas. Well the 'Big House' means Comte Morin. Comte Morin you know has a family estate

here. So I said 'My good woman, without knowing it you have done my article for me.' "

Then he plucked me by the sleeve:

"Come home with me and have a bit of dinner; we'll eat up the scraps."

I refused, not wishing to become too intimate with my editor-in-chief. I paid but one more visit to Madame Planchonnet who, seated with a bunch of wild flowers beside her, was sewing a patch on the seat of her eldest boy's knickerbockers. Our conversation was characterized by extreme reserve and, if since then I continued to love Madame Planchonnet, it was a sentiment that only came to me by moonlight, the pale beams of which she closely resembled.

I soon learned my job and I worked at it conscientiously. I spent the whole day in cutting paragraphs out of the newspapers, correcting proofs and writing up M. Veulet.

As for Comte Morin, I gave him no quarter, him or his opinions.

I seldom went out. One day, however, I took a stroll along the river, which mirrors in its blue waters the willows and the white houses on its banks. That day I went farther into the country than I had been before and I found myself at length in front of some park gates.

Half-way up the hill which rose gently from the road, stood a big country-house built in Empire style with a columned portico. At that moment the gates opened and there, before me, was my unknown friend, the paralytic whom I had encountered in the little wood. Again he was accompanied by his little girl, but this time she was not walking. She was lying full length in a perambulator which was wheeled by a governess. It was painful to see her poor little white face lying there on an embroidered pillow in the shadow of the lowered hood. She looked like one of those little waxen martyrs adorned with silver filigree, on whose wounds and jewels the nuns of Spain love to gaze and meditate in the solitude of their cells.

The old man was elegantly dressed. His face which had been "made up" was all smeared with tears. He came towards me with little jerky steps, took me by the hand and led me towards his little girl.

"You don't think she's changed since you last saw her? You don't think so, now, do you?" he asked in a sort of wheedling, childish tone. "It was the day she threw her—er—her ball into a, into a—er —into a tree. She is my daughter. Don't you think she looks better?"

We walked along together.

I did my best to comfort the poor man; but I was feeling anything but cheerful myself. As we relapsed into silence the little sufferer called out:

"Mamma! Mamma! I want to see Mamma!"

Her father shuddered in every limb and said nothing.

"I want to see Mamma!" the child repeated, weeping.

Then the father, raising his eyes, stretched forth both his arms as if to call Heaven to witness how unmerited were his sufferings.

The perambulator which we were following in silence came to a halt in a little pine wood. The governess lowered the hood and we looked at the child. She seemed to be afraid of something that was invisible to us. I endeavoured to amuse her with flowers and songs. I succeeded. A little air and a little distraction almost put new life into her. She lifted her head and, when an hour had gone by, her cheeks were almost rosy.

When it grew chilly and she had to be taken back to the house, her father pressed my hand and stammered out:

"I thank you, Monsieur. I wish I could be of some service to you. I am Comte Morin."

Comte Morin! I was thunderstruck.

It was now my turn to stammer.

"Comte Morin," I said, "the Parliamentary candidate?"

"Hush, hush," said he, "the—er—the—er—the prefect makes a great deal of my candidature. He —er—says—er—er that I am the—er—only candidate agreeable to the Government—er—that—er —has any chance of success. But I absolutely refuse . . . to stand. I cannot and I will not leave this child. The—er—er—the Emperor will understand that I cannot. This child has no one . . you . . understand . . . she has no one. Her—er—er—mother . . . .

I would have made a clean breast then and there of all the wrongs I had done him, but I did not deem him strong enough to listen to such a confession.

M. Veulet was elected. He beat Comte Morin by three hundred and sixty-two votes. When the election was over, I returned to Paris. I had been there about three weeks when I had a visit from Fontanet.

"Well, my lad," he said, "so you've been putting your foot in it again, have you? There are some nice stories going round about you. As for me, I don't know how much is true and how much lies. I know you. We were old chums, and I know perfectly well that you don't mean any harm. But, be-

tween ourselves, you've made a mistake, a big mistake. That's not the way to make a start in life."

I begged him to explain himself. He shrugged his shoulders with an assurance that quite frightened me.

"You know quite well what I mean. A man can't be such a duffer as that. Fancy! Sent to back up M. Veulet, you go and start intriguing with his opponent."

I strongly protested.

"Oh!" said Fontanet. "But Veulet has told me all about it. You *have* made a mess of it. I can understand that a case might arise when a man might leave his own party and join another (he had an understanding soul had my friend Fontanet) but, even so, there are limits to observe and one ought to have some sort of object. You are a duffer. You do not see that the Empire is over and done with; you never do see anything. You didn't see that this Comte Morin of yours is merely an old schemer (my friend Fontanet, let me tell you, always saw everything). The best part about Morin, my boy, is his wife. When I say *his* wife perhaps that's hardly correct. She leaves him at home while she goes off gallivanting about at all the spas and fashionable watering-places. I got some one to give me an introduction to her at Trou-

ville. I danced with her at a Charity Ball. I don't want to say anything against her; it wouldn't be right that I should, but between ourselves she's more than a little bit flighty."

As he said this he stroked his whiskers, put a soft wooing look into his eyes and strutted about with a dandified air. He was a charming fellow, I assure you, my friend Fontanet.

What do you suppose I did as I listened to him. Why, I began to laugh, an attitude that called forth further remonstrances.

"Ah, you're fooling," said Fontanet.

Fooling was I! Ah, no doubt my head was full of merry subjects for reflection. Merry they were with a vengence! I was thinking about the poor little dying child whom, by the riverside, I had heard calling for her "little mummy" in accents of despair and desolation, for her "little mummy" who was at that very moment dancing with my friend Fontanet in some casino. It was because I was thinking of all this that I appeared to be fooling. But Fontanet restored me to a better frame of mind.

"In your own interests," he said, "you ought to be more careful in your behaviour towards M. Veulet. You have failed to appreciate him. He is a man of great worth, of a piece with his works.

Fancy at forty he was still keeping a boarding-house in Montmartre when, plunging into business, he went bankrupt three times, till now, at fifty-two, he is a public man and a candidate for parliament. The man has no end of energy and it is foolish to treat him as you have done."

"What!" I cried, "M. Veulet kept a boarding-house in Montmartre when he was forty?"

"Didn't you know that?" answered Fontanet simply.

What I knew was that he had served as a volunteer in the Old World and the New. That he had fought against the Spaniards in Peru under General Pezet; at Pittsburg and at the Siege of Corinth; in Liberia under General Sherman against the slave party; under Stephen Allen Benson against the blacks in the Palm Islands; at Warsaw under Langiewicz side by side with Mademoiselle Pustlowoitoff; in the Caucasus under Schamyl against the Russians; and alone against all comers on board a slave ship. That's what I knew.

"Who told you all those yarns?" asked Fontanet disdainfully.

I replied that he himself had, one spring morning in the Jardin du Luxembourg. But he said—and his voice had the ring of truth in it—that I was dreaming and that he was incapable of telling

such a lot of taradiddles. I didn't argue with him. Fontanet and I had not the same idea of certitude. Philosophic doubt, which has so tormented my spirit, never so much as entered into his.

As he left me, he held out his hand. He was the best of chums.

A few months rolled by. One spring morning, as I was at work at my table, I heard the floor creaking in the most alarming fashion. I turned round expecting to find myself face to face with a bear. Planchonnet stood there before me. I really never imagined him so immense and so uncouth. Nevertheless he had added some new attractions to his get up. His hat was tilted rakishly over one ear, he had a cigar in his mouth and his fingers—what fingers?—were toying with a slender cane.

We had lunch together.

"Madame Planchonnet," he informed me, "has just presented me with my sixth. I have come to ask you to stand godfather. The christening celebrations will take place at Rheims and will last a week."

"At Rheims?"

"Yes, I am editing a government rag there." Then he began telling me about my "godson."

Born with one tooth in his head, he was an immense and magnificent infant.

We went and took a stroll in the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, where the trees were already beginning to bud and summer dresses to appear. Among the long line of carriages that were making their way towards the Arc de Triomphe, I noticed a handsome victoria in which M. Veulet was reclining like a lion couchant. From afar one could not help seeing and admiring his remarkable nose and his august beard.

Protector of the strong, he waved his hand as he passed the tilburys and landaus of the fashionable financiers and smiled some of those gracious and condescending smiles of his.

I was ill advised enough to point him out to Planchonnet, who suddenly let go my arm and rushed after the victoria brandishing his stick and shouting out:

"Thief, liar, humbug. I worked your election and you have not paid me. I'll break my stick over your head."

Happily the victoria rolled swiftly away.

THE END

BALTHASAR

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

A TRANSLATION BY
MRS. JOHN LANE

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BALTHASAR

BALTHASAR

"Magos reges fere habuit Oriens." [1]

TERTULLIAN.

N those days Balthasar, whom the Greeks called Saracin, reigned in Ethiopia. He was black, but comely of countenance. He had a simple soul and a generous heart.

The third year of his reign, which was the twenty-second of his age, he left his dominions on a visit to Balkis, Queen of Sheba. The mage Sembobitis and the eunuch Menkera accompanied him. He had in his train seventy-five camels bearing cinnamon, myrrh, gold dust, and elephants' tusks.

As they rode, Sembobitis instructed him in the influences of the planets,[1] as well as in the virtues of precious stones, and Menkera sang to him canticles from the sacred mysteries. He paid but little heed to them, but amused himself instead watching the jackals with their ears pricked up, sitting erect on the edge of the desert.

At last, after a march of twelve days, Balthasar became conscious of the fragrance of roses, and

[1] The East commonly held kings versed in magic.

very soon they saw the gardens that surround the city of Sheba. On their way they passed young girls dancing under pomegranate trees in full bloom.

"The dance," said Sembobitis the mage, "is a prayer."

"One could sell these women for a great price," said Menkera the eunuch.

As they entered the city they were amazed at the extent of the sheds and warehouses and workshops that lay before them, and also at the immense quantities of merchandise with which these were piled.

For a long time they walked through streets thronged with chariots, street porters, donkeys and donkey-drivers, until all at once the marble walls, the purple awnings and the gold cupolas of the palace of Balkis, lay spread out before them.

The Queen of Sheba received them in a courtyard cooled by jets of perfumed water which fell with a tinkling cadence like a shower of pearls.

Smiling, she stood before them in a jewelled robe.

At sight of her Balthasar was greatly troubled.

She seemed to him lovelier than a dream and more beautiful than desire.

"My lord," and Sembobitis spoke under his breath, "remember to conclude a good commercial treaty with the queen."

"Have a care, my lord," Menkera added. "It is

said she employs magic with which to gain the love of men."

Then, having prostrated themselves, the mage and the eunuch retired.

Balthasar, left alone with Balkis, tried to speak; he opened his mouth but he could not utter a word. He said to himself, "The queen will be angered at my silence."

But the queen still smiled and looked not at all angry. She was the first to speak with a voice sweeter than the sweetest music.

"Be welcome, and sit down at my side." And with a slender finger like a ray of white light she pointed to the purple cushions on the ground. Balthasar sat down, gave a great sigh, and grasping a cushion in each hand he cried hastily:

"Madam, I would these two cushions were two giants, your enemies; I would wring their necks."

And as he spoke he clutched the cushions with such violence in his hands that the delicate stuff cracked and out flew a cloud of snow-white down. One of the tiny feathers swayed a moment in the air and then alighted on the bosom of the queen.

"My lord Balthasar," Balkis said, blushing; "why do you wish to kill giants?"

"Because I love you," said Balthasar.

"Tell me," Balkis asked, "is the water good in the wells of your capital?"

"Yes," Balthasar replied in some surprise.

"I am also curious to know," Balkis continued, "how a dry conserve of fruit is made in Ethiopia?"

The king did not know what to answer.

"Now please tell me, please," she urged.

Whereupon with a mighty effort of memory he tried to describe how Ethiopian cooks preserve quinces in honey. But she did not listen. And suddenly, she interrupted him.

"My lord, it is said that you love your neighbour, Queen Candace. Is she more beautiful than I am? Do not deceive me."

"More beautiful than you, madam," Balthasar cried as he fell at the feet of Balkis," how could that possibly be!"

"Well, then, her eyes? her mouth, her colour? her throat?" the queen continued.

With his arms outstretched towards her, Balthasar cried:

"Give me but the little feather that has fallen on your neck and in return you shall have half my kingdom as well as the wise Sembobitis and Menkera the eunuch."

But she rose and fled with a ripple of clear laughter.

When the mage and the eunuch returned they found their master plunged deep in thought which was not his custom.

"My lord!" asked Sembobitis, "have you concluded a good commercial treaty?"

That day Balthasar supped with the Queen of Sheba and drank the wine of the palm-tree.

"It is true, then," said Balkis as they supped together, "that Queen Candace is not so beautiful as I?"

"Queen Candace is black," replied Balthasar.

Balkis looked expressively at Balthasar.

"One may be black and yet not ill-looking," she said.

"Balkis!" cried the king.

He said no more, but seized her in his arms, and the head of the queen sank back under the pressure of his lips. But he saw that she was weeping. Thereupon he spoke to her in the low, caressing tones that nurses use to their nurslings. He called her his little blossom and his little star.

"Why do you weep?" he asked. "And what must one do to dry your tears? If you have a desire tell me and it shall be fulfilled."

She ceased weeping, but she was sunk deep in thought. He implored her a long time to tell him her desire. And at last she spoke.

"I wish to know fear."

And as Balthasar did not seem to understand, she explained to him that for a long time past she had greatly longed to face some unknown danger, but she could not, for the men and gods of Sheba watched over her.

"And yet," she added with a sigh, "during the night I long to feel the delicious chill of terror penetrate my flesh. To have my hair stand up on my head with horror. O! it would be such joy to be afraid!"

She twined her arms about the neck of the dusky king, and said with the voice of a pleading child:

"Night has come. Let us go through the town in disguise. Are you willing?"

He agreed. She ran to the window at once and looked through the lattice into the square below.

"A beggar is lying against the palace wall. Give him your garments and ask him in exchange for his camel-hair turban and the coarse cloth about his loins. Be quick and I will dress myself."

And she ran out of the banqueting-hall joyfully clapping her hands one against the other.

Balthasar took off his linen tunic embroidered with gold and girded himself with the skirt of the beggar. It gave him the look of a real slave. The

queen soon reappeared dressed in the blue seamless garment of the women who work in the fields.

"Come!" she said.

And she dragged Balthasar along the narrow corridors towards a little door which opened on the fields.

II

HE night was dark, and in the darkness of the night Balkis looked very small.

She led Balthasar to one of the taverns where wastrels and street porters foregathered along with prostitutes. The two sat down at a table and saw through the foul air by the light of a fetid lamp, unclean human brutes attack each other with fists and knives for a woman or a cup of fermented liquor, while others with clenched fists snored under the tables. The tavern-keeper, lying on a pile of sacking, watched the drunken brawlers with a prudent eye. Balkis, having seen some salt fish hanging from the rafters of the ceiling, said to her companion:

"I much wish to eat one of these fish with pounded onions."

Balthasar gave the order. When she had eaten he discovered that he had forgotten to bring money. It gave him no concern, for he thought that he could slip out with her without paying the reckoning. But the tavern-keeper barred their way, calling them a vile slave and a worthless she-ass. Balthasar

struck him to the ground with a blow of his fist. Whereupon some of the drinkers drew their knives and flung themselves on the two strangers. But the black man, seizing an enormous pestle used to pound Egyptian onions, knocked down two of his assailants and forced the others back. And all the while he was conscious of the warmth of Balkis' body as she cowered close against him; it was this which made him invincible.

The tavern-keeper's friends, not daring to approach again, flung at him from the end of the pothouse jars of oil, pewter vessels, burning lamps, and even the huge bronze cauldron in which a whole sheep was stewing. This cauldron fell with a horrible crash on Balthasar's head and split his skull. For a moment he stood as if dazed, and then summoning all his strength he flung the cauldron back with such force that its weight was increased tenfold. The shock of the hurtling metal was mingled with indescribable roars and death rattles. Profiting by the terror of the survivors, and fearing that Balkis might be injured, he seized her in his arms and fled with her through the silence and darkness of the lonely byways. The stillness of night enveloped the earth, and the fugitives heard the clamour of the women and the carousers, who pursued them at haphazard, die away in the darkness.

Soon they heard nothing more than the sound of dripping blood as it fell from the brow of Balthasar on the breast of Balkis.

"I love you," the queen murmured.

And by the light of the moon as it emerged from behind a cloud the king saw the white and liquid radiance of her half-closed eyes. They descended the dry bed of a stream, and suddenly Balthasar's foot slipped on the moss and they fell together locked in each other's embrace. They seemed to sink forever into a delicious void, and the world of the living ceased to exist for them. They were still plunged in the enchanting forgetfulness of time, space and separate existence, when at daybreak the gazelles came to drink out of the hollows among the stones.

At that moment a passing band of brigands discovered the two lovers lying on the moss.

"They are poor," they said, "but we shall sell them for a great price, for they are so young and beautiful."

Upon which they surrounded them, and having bound them they tied them to the tail of an ass and proceeded on their way.

The black man so bound threatened the brigands with death. But Balkis, who shivered in the cool,

fresh air of the morning, only smiled, as if at something unseen.

They tramped through frightful solitudes until the heat of mid-day made itself felt. The sun was already high when the brigands unbound their prisoners, and, letting them sit in the shade of a rock, threw them some mouldy bread which Balthasar disdained to touch but which Balkis ate greedily.

She laughed. And when the brigand chief asked why she laughed, she replied:

"I laugh at the thought that I shall have you all hanged."

"Indeed!" cried the chief, "a curious assertion in the mouth of a scullery wench like you, my love! Doubtless you will hang us all by aid of that black-amoor gallant of yours?"

At this insult Balthasar flew into a fearful rage, and he flung himself on the brigand and clutched his neck with such violence that he nearly strangled him.

But the other drew his knife and plunged it into his body to the very hilt. The poor king rolled to earth, and as he turned on Balkis a dying glance his sight faded.

III

AT this moment was heard an uproar of men, horses and weapons, and Balkis recognised her trusty Abner who had come at the head of her guards to rescue his queen, of whose mysterious disappearance he had heard during the night.

Three times he prostrated himself at the feet of Balkis, and ordered the litter to advance which had been prepared to receive her. In the meantime the guards bound the hands of the brigands. The queen turned towards the chief and said gently: "You cannot accuse me of having made you an idle promise, my friend, when I said you would be hanged."

The mage Sembobitis and Menkera the eunuch, who stood beside Abner, gave utterance to terrible cries when they saw their king lying motionless on the ground with a knife in his stomach. They raised him with great care. Sembobitis, who was highly versed in the science of medicine, saw that he still breathed. He applied a temporary bandage

while Menkera wiped the foam from the king's lips. Then they bound him to a horse and led him gently to the palace of the queen.

For fifteen days Balthasar lay in the agonies of delirium. He raved without ceasing of the steaming cauldron and the moss in the ravine, and he incessantly cried aloud for Balkis. At last, on the sixteenth day, he opened his eyes and saw at his bedside Sembobitis and Menkera, but he did not see the queen.

"Where is she? What is she doing?"

"My lord," replied Menkera, "she is closeted with the King of Comagena."

"They are doubtless agreeing to an exchange of merchandise," added the mage Sembobitis.

"But be not so disturbed, my lord, or you will redouble your fever."

"I must see her," cried Balthasar. And he flew towards the apartments of the queen, and neither the sage nor the eunuch could restrain him. On nearing the bedchamber he beheld the King of Comagena come forth covered with gold and glittering like the sun. Balkis, smiling and with eyes closed, lay on a purple couch.

"My Balkis, my Balkis!" cried Balthasar.

She did not even turn her head but seemed to prolong a dream.

Balthasar approached and took her hand which she rudely snatched away.

"What do you want?" she said.

"Do you ask?" the black king answered, and burst into tears.

She turned on him her hard, calm eyes.

Then he realised that she had forgotten everything, and he reminded her of the night of the stream.

"In truth, my lord," said she, "I do not know to what you refer. The wine of the palm does not agree with you. You must have dreamed."

"What," cried the unhappy king, wringing his hands, "your kisses, and the knife which has left its mark on me, are these dreams?"

She rose; the jewels on her robe made a sound as of hail and flashed forth lightnings.

"My lord," she said, "it is the hour my council assembles. I have not the leisure to interpret the dreams of your suffering brain. Take some repose. Farewell."

Balthasar felt himself sinking, but with a supreme effort not to betray his weakness to this wicked woman, he ran to his room where he fell in a swoon and his wound re-opened.

IV

FOR three weeks he remained unconscious and as one dead, but having on the twenty-second day recovered his senses, he seized the hand of Sembobitis, who, with Menkera, watched over him, and cried, weeping:

"O, my friends, how happy you are, one to be old and the other the same as old. But no! there is no happiness on earth, everything is bad, for love is an evil and Balkis is wicked."

"Wisdom confers happiness," replied Sembobitis.

"I will try it," said Balthasar. "But let us depart at once for Ethiopia." And as he had lost all he loved he resolved to consecrate himself to wisdom and to become a mage. If this decision gave him no especial pleasure it at least restored to him something of tranquillity. Every evening, seated on the terrace of his palace in company with the sage Sembobitis and Menkera the eunuch, he gazed at the palm-trees standing motionless against the horizon, or watched the crocodiles by the light of the moon float down the Nile like trunks of trees.

"One never wearies of admiring the beauties of Nature," said Sembobitis.

"Doubtless," said Balthasar, "but there are other things in Nature more beautiful even than palm-trees and crocodiles."

This he said thinking of Balkis. But Sembobitis, who was old, said:

"There is of course the phenomenon of the rising of the Nile which I have explained. Man is created to understand."

"He is created to love," replied Balthasar sighing. "There are things which cannot be explained."

"And what may those be?" asked Sembobitis.

A woman's treason," the king replied.

Balthasar, however, having decided to become a mage, had a tower built from the summit of which might be discerned many kingdoms and the infinite spaces of Heaven. The tower was constructed of brick and rose high above all other towers. It took no less than two years to build, and Balthasar expended in its construction the entire treasure of the king, his father. Every night he climbed to the top of this tower and there he studied the heavens under the guidance of the sage Sembobitis.

"The constellations of the heavens disclose our destiny," said Sembobitis.

And he replied:

"It must be admitted nevertheless that these signs are obscure. But while I study them I forget Balkis, and that is a great boon."

And among truths most useful to know, the mage taught that the stars are fixed like nails in the arch of the sky, and that there are five planets, namely: Bel, Merodach, and Nebo, which are male, while Sin and Mylitta are female.

"Silver," he further explained, "corresponds to Sin, which is the moon, iron to Merodach, and tin to Bel."

And the worthy Balthasar answered: "Such is the kind of knowledge I wish to acquire. While I study astronomy I think neither of Balkis nor anything else on earth. The sciences are beneficent; they keep men from thinking. Teach me the knowledge, Sembobitis, which destroys all feeling in men and I will raise you to great honour among my people."

This was the reason that Sembobitis taught the king wisdom.

He taught him the power of incantation, according to the principles of Astrampsychos, Gobryas and Pazatas. And the more Balthasar studied the twelve houses of the sun, the less he thought of Balkis, and Menkera, observing this, was filled with a great joy.

"Acknowledge, my lord, that Queen Balkis under her golden robes has little cloven feet like a goat's."

"Who ever told you such nonsense?" asked the King.

"My lord, it is the common report both in Sheba and Ethiopia," replied the eunuch. "It is universally said that Queen Balkis has a shaggy leg and a foot made of two black horns."

Balthasar shrugged his shoulders. He knew that the legs and feet of Balkis were like the legs and feet of all other women and perfect in their beauty. And yet the mere idea spoiled the remembrance of her whom he had so greatly loved. He felt a grievance against Balkis that her beauty was not without blemish in the imagination of those who knew nothing about it. At the thought that he had possessed a woman who, though in reality perfectly formed, passed as a monstrosity, he was seized with such a sense of repugnance that he had no further desire to see Balkis again. Balthasar had a simple soul, but love is a very complex emotion.

From that day on the king made great progress both in magic and astrology. He studied the conjunction of the stars with extreme care, and he drew horoscopes with an accuracy equal to that of Sembobitis himself.

"Sembobitis," he asked, "are you willing to an-

swer with your head the truth of my horoscopes?"

And the sage Sembobitis replied:

"My lord, science is infallible, but the learned often err."

Balthasar was endowed with fine natural sense.

He said:

"Only that which is true is divine, and what is divine is hidden from us. In vain we search for truth. And yet I have discovered a new star in the sky. It is a beautiful star, and it seems alive; and when it sparkles it looks like a celestial eye that blinks gently. I seem to hear it call to me. Happy, happy, happy is he who is born under this star. See, Sembobitis, how this charming and splendid star looks at us."

But Sembobitis did not see the star because he would not see it. Wise and old, he did not like novelties.

And alone in the silence of night Balthasar repeated: "Happy, happy, happy he who is born under this star."

V

THE rumour spread over all Ethiopia and the neighbouring kingdoms that King Balthasar had ceased to love Balkis.

When the tidings reached the country of Sheba, Balkis was as indignant as if she had been betrayed. She ran to the King of Comagena who was employing his time in forgetting his country in the city of Sheba.

"My friend," she cried, "do you know what I have just heard? Balthasar loves me no longer!"

"What does it matter," said the King of Comagena, "since we love one another?"

"But do you not feel how this blackamoor has insulted me?"

"No," said the King of Comagena, "I do not."

Whereupon she drove him ignominiously out of her presence, and ordered her grand vizier to prepare for a journey into Ethiopia.

"We shall set out this very night. And I shall cut off your head if all is not ready by sundown."

But when she was alone she began to sob.

"I love him! He loves me no longer, and I love him," she sighed in the sincerity of her heart.

And one night, when on his tower watching the miraculous star, Balthasar, casting his eyes towards earth, saw a long black line sinuously curving over the distant sands of the desert like an army of ants. Little by little what seemed to be ants grew larger and sufficiently distinct for the king to be able to recognise horses, camels and elephants.

The caravan having approached the city, Balthasar distinguished the glittering scimitars and the black horses of the guards of the Queen of Sheba. He even recognised the queen herself, and he was profoundly disturbed, for he felt that he would again love her. The star shone in the zenith with a marvellous brilliancy. Below, extended on a litter of purple and gold, Balkis looked small and brilliant like the star.

Balthasar was conscious of being drawn towards her by some terrible power. Still he turned his head away with a desperate effort, and lifting his eyes he again saw the star. Thereupon the star spoke and said: "Glory to God in the Heavens and peace on earth to men of good will!

"Take a measure of myrrh, gentle King Balthasar, and follow me. I will guide thee to the

feet of a little child who is about to be born in a stable between an ass and an ox.

"And this little child is the King of Kings. He will comfort all those who need comforting.

"He calls thee to Him, O Balthasar, thou whose soul is as dark as thy face, but whose heart is as guileless as the heart of a child.

"He has chosen thee because thou hast suffered, and He will give thee riches, happiness and love.

"He will say to thee: 'Be poor joyfully, for that is true riches.' He will also say to thee: 'True happiness is in the renunciation of happiness. Love Me and love none other but Me, because I alone am love.' "

At these words a divine peace fell like a flood of light over the dark face of the king.

Balthasar listened with rapture to the star. He felt himself becoming a new man.

Prostrate beside him, Sembobitis and Menkera worshipped, their faces touching the stone.

Queen Balkis watched Balthasar. She realised that never again would there be love for her in that heart filled with a love divine. She turned white with rage and gave orders for the caravan to return at once to the land of Sheba.

As soon as the star had ceased to speak, Balthasar and his companions descended from the

tower. Then, having prepared a measure of myrrh, they formed a caravan and departed in the direction towards which they were guided by the star. They journeyed a long time through unknown countries, the star always journeying in front of them.

One day, finding themselves in a place where three roads met, they saw two kings advance accompanied by a numerous retinue; one was young and fair of face. He greeted Balthasar and said:

"My name is Gaspar. I am a king, and I bear gold as a gift to the child that is about to be born in Bethlehem of Judea."

The second king advanced in turn. He was an old man, and his white beard covered his breast.

"My name is Melchior," he said, "and I am a king, and I bring frankincense to the holy child who is to teach Truth to mankind."

"I am bound whither you are," said Balthasar. "I have conquered my lust, and for that reason the star has spoken to me."

"I," said Melchior, "have conquered my pride, and that is why I have been called."

"I," said Gaspar, "have conquered my cruelty, and for that reason I go with you."

And the three mages proceeded on their journey together. The star which they had seen in the East preceded them until, arriving above the place

where the child lay, it stood still. And seeing the star standing still they rejoiced with a great joy.

And, entering the house they found the child with Mary his mother, and prostrating themselves, they worshipped him. And opening their treasures they offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh, as it is written in the Gospel.

THE CURÉ'S MIGNONETTE

TO JULES LEMAÎTRE

THE CURÉ'S MIGNONETTE

IN a village of the Bocage I once knew a curé, a holy man who denied himself every indulgence, and who cheerfully practised the virtue of renunciation, and knew no joy but that of sacrifice. In his garden he cultivated fruit-trees, vegetables and medicinal plants, but fearing beauty even in flowers, he would have neither roses nor jasmine. He only allowed himself the innocent luxury of a few tufts of mignonette whose twisted stems, so modestly flower-crowned, would not distract his attention as he read his breviary among his cabbage-plots under the sky of our dear Father in Heaven.

The holy man had so little distrust of his mignonette that he would often in passing pick a spray and inhale its fragrance for a long time. All the plant asked was to be permitted to grow. If one spray was cut, four grew in its place. So much so, indeed, that, the devil aiding, the priest's mignonette soon covered a vast extent of his little garden. It overflowed into the paths and pulled at the good priest's cassock as he passed, until, distracted by the

foolish plant, he would pause as often as twenty times an hour while he read or said his prayers.

From springtime until autumn the presbytery was redolent of mignonette. Behold what we may come to and how feeble we are! Not without reason do we say that all our natural inclinations lead us towards sin! The man of God had succeeded in guarding his eyes, but he had left his nostrils undefended, and so the devil, as it were, caught him by the nose. This saint now inhaled the fragrance of mignonette with avidity and lust, that is to say, with that sinful instinct which makes us long for the enjoyment of natural pleasures and which leads us into all sorts of temptations.

Henceforth he seemed to take less delight in the odours of Paradise and the perfumes which are our Lady's merits. His holiness dwindled, and he might, perhaps, have sunk into voluptuousness and become little by little like those lukewarm souls which Heaven reject had not succour come to him in the nick of time.

Once, long ago, in the Thebaid, an angel stole from a hermit a cup of gold which still bound the holy man to the vanities of earth. A similar mercy was vouchsafed to this priest of the Bocage. A white hen scratched the earth about the mignonette with such good-will that it all died.

We are not informed whence this bird came. As for myself, I am inclined to believe that the angel who in the desert stole the hermit's cup transformed himself into a white hen on purpose to destroy the only obstacle which barred the good priest's path towards perfection.

M. PIGEONNEAU

TO GILBERT AUGUSTIN-THIERRY

M. PIGEONNEAU

I HAVE, as everybody knows, devoted my whole life to Egyptian archæology. I should be very ungrateful to my country, to science, and to myself, if I regretted the profession to which I was called in my early youth and which I have followed with honour these forty years. My labours have not been in vain. I may say, without flattering myself, that my article on *The Handle of an Egyptian mirror in the Museum of the Louvre* may still be consulted with profit, though it dates back to the beginning of my career.

As for the exhaustive studies which I subsequently devoted to one of the bronze weights found in 1851 in the excavations at the Serapeium, it would be ungracious for me not to think well of them, as they opened for me the doors of the Institute.

Encouraged by the flattering reception with which my researches of this nature were received by many of my new colleagues, I was tempted for a moment to treat in one comprehensive work of the weights and measures in use at Alexandria in the reign of Ptolemy Auletes (80-52). I soon recognised, how-

ever, that a subject so general could not be dealt with by the really profound student, and that positive science could not approach it without running a risk of incurring all sorts of mischances. I felt that in investigating several subjects at once I was forsaking the fundamental principles of archæology. If to-day I confess my mistake, if I acknowledge the incredible enthusiasm with which I was inspired by a far too ambitious scheme, I do so for the sake of the young, who will thus learn by my example to conquer their imagination. It is our most cruel foe. The student who has not succeeded in stifling it is lost for ever to erudition. I still tremble to think in what depths I was nearly plunged by my adventurous spirit. I was within an ace of what one calls history. What a downfall! I should have sunk into art. For history is only art, or, at best, a false science. Who to-day does not know that the historians preceded the archæologists, as astrologers preceded the astronomers, as the alchemists preceded the chemists, and as the monkeys preceded men? Thank Heaven! I escaped with a mere fright.

My third work, I hasten to say, was wisely planned. It was a monograph entitled, *On the toilet of an Egyptian lady of the Middle Empire, from an unpublished picture.* I treated the subject

so as to avoid all side issues, and I did not permit any generalising to intrude itself. I guarded myself against those considerations, comparisons and views with which certain of my colleagues have marred the exposition of their most valuable discoveries. But why should a work planned so sanely have met with so fantastic a fate? By what freak of destiny should it have proved the cause of the monstrous aberration of my mind? But let me not anticipate events nor confuse dates. My dissertation was intended to be read at a public sitting of the five academies, a distinction all the more precious, as it rarely falls to the lot of works of this character. These academic gatherings have for some years past been largely attended by people of fashion.

The day I delivered my lecture the hall was crowded by a distinguished audience. Women were there in great numbers. Lovely faces and brilliant toilettes graced the galleries. My discourse was listened to with respect. It was not interrupted by those thoughtless and noisy demonstrations which naturally follow mere literary productions. No, the public preserved an attitude more in harmony with the nature of the work presented to them. They were serious and grave.

As I paused between the phrases the better to

disentangle the different trains of thought, I had leisure to examine behind my spectacles the entire hall. I can truly say that not the faintest smile could be seen on any lips. On the contrary, even the freshest faces wore an expression of austerity. I seemed to have ripened all their intellects as if by magic. Here and there while I read some young people whispered to their neighbours. They were probably debating some special point treated of in my discourse.

More than that, a beautiful young creature of twenty-two or twenty-four, seated in the left corner of the north balcony, was listening with great attention and taking notes. Her face had a delicacy of features and a mobility of expression truly remarkable. The attention with which she listened to my words gave an added charm to her singular face. She was not alone. A big, robust man, who, like the Assyrian kings, wore a long curled beard and long black hair, stood beside her and occasionally spoke to her in a low voice. My attention, which at first was divided amongst my entire audience, concentrated itself little by little on the young woman. She inspired me, I confess, with an interest which certain of my colleagues might consider unworthy of a scientific mind such as mine, though I feel sure that none of them under similar circumstances would

have been more indifferent than I. As I proceeded she scribbled in a little note-book; and as she listened to my discourse one could see that she was visibly swayed by the most contradictory emotions; she seemed to pass from satisfaction and joy to surprise and even anxiety. I examined her with increasing curiosity. Would to God I had set eyes on her and her only that day under the cupola!

I had nearly finished; there hardly remained more than twenty-five or thirty pages at most to read when suddenly my eyes encountered those of the man with the Assyrian beard. How can I explain to you what happened then, seeing that I cannot explain it to myself? All I can say is that the glance of this personage put me at once into a state of indescribable agitation. The eye-balls fixed on me were of a greenish colour. I could not turn my own away. I stood there dumb and open-mouthed. As I had stopped speaking the audience began to applaud. Silence being restored, I tried to continue my discourse. But in spite of the most violent efforts, I could not tear my eyes from those two living lights to which they were so mysteriously riveted. That was not all. By a more amazing phenomenon still, and contrary to all the principles of my whole life, I began to improvise. God alone knows if this was the result of my own free will!

Under the influence of a strange, unknown and irresistible force I delivered with grace and burning eloquence certain philosophical reflections on the toilet of women in the course of the ages; I generalised, I rhapsodised, I grew eloquent—God forgive me—about the eternal feminine, and the passion which glides like a breath about those perfumed veils with which women know how to adorn their beauty.

The man with the Assyrian beard never ceased staring steadily at me. And I still continued to speak. At last he lowered his eyes, and then I stopped. It is humiliating to add that this portion of my address, which was quite as foreign to my own natural impulse as it was contrary to the scientific mind, was rewarded with tumultuous applause. The young woman in the north balcony clapped her hands and smiled.

I was followed at the reading-desk by a member of the Academy who seemed visibly annoyed at having to be heard after me. Perhaps his fears were exaggerated. At any rate he was listened to without too much impatience. I am under the impression that it was verse that he read.

The meeting being over, I left the hall in company with several of my colleagues, who renewed

their congratulations with a sincerity in which I try to believe.

Having paused a moment on the quay near the lions of Creuzot to exchange a few greetings, I observed the man with the Assyrian beard and his beautiful companion enter a *coupé*. I happened accidentally to be standing next to an eloquent philosopher, of whom it is said that he is equally at home in worldly elegance and in cosmic theories. The young lady, putting her delicate head and her little hand out of the carriage door, called him by name and said with a slight English accent:

"My dear friend, you've forgotten me. That's too bad!"

After the carriage had gone I asked my illustrious colleague who this charming person and her companion were.

"What!" he replied, "you do not know Miss Morgan and her physician Daoud, who cures all diseases by means of magnetism, hypnotism, and suggestion? Annie Morgan is the daughter of the richest merchant in Chicago. Two years ago she came to Paris with her mother, and she has had a wonderful house built on the Avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne. She is highly educated and remarkably clever."

"You do not surprise me," I replied, "for I have reason to think that this American lady is of a very serious turn of mind."

My brilliant colleague smiled as he shook my hand.

I walked home to the Rue Saint Jacques, where I have lived these last thirty years in a modest lodging from which I can just see the tops of the trees in the garden of the Luxembourg, and I sat down at my writing-table.

For three days I sat there assiduously at work, before me a little statuette representing the goddess Pasht with her cat's head. This little monument bears an inscription imperfectly deciphered by Monsieur Grébault. I was at work on an adequate interpretation with comments. The incident at the institute had left a less vivid impression on my mind than might have been feared. I was not unduly disturbed. To tell the truth, I had even forgotten it a little, and it required new occurrences to revive its remembrance.

I had, therefore, leisure during these three days to bring my version of the inscription and my notes to a satisfactory conclusion. I only interrupted my archæological work to read the newspapers, which were loud in my praise.

Newspapers, absolutely ignorant of all learning,

spoke in praise of that "charming passage" which had concluded my discourse. "It was a revelation," they said, "and M. Pigeonneau had prepared a most agreeable surprise for us." I do not know why I refer to such trifles, because, usually I am quite indifferent as to what they say about me in the newspapers.

I had been already closeted in my study for three days when a ring at the door-bell startled me. There was something imperious, fantastic, and strange in the motion communicated to the bellrope which disturbed me, and it was with real anxiety that I went myself to open the door. And whom did I find on the landing? The young American recently so absorbed at the reading of my treatise. It was Miss Morgan in person.

"Monsieur Pigeonneau?"

"Yes."

"I recognised you at once, though you are not wearing your beautiful coat with the embroidery of green palm-leaves. But, please don't put it on for my sake. I like you much better in your dressing-gown."

I led her into my study. She looked curiously at the papyri, the prints, and odds and ends of all kinds which covered the walls to the ceiling, and then she looked silently for some time at the goddess

Pasht who stood on my writing-table. Finally she said:

"She is charming."

"Do you refer to this little monument, Madam? As a matter of fact, it is distinguished by an exceptional inscription of a sufficiently curious nature. But may I ask what has procured for me the honour of your visit?"

"O," she cried. "I don't care a fig for its remarkable inscriptions. There never was a more exquisitely delicate cat-face. Of course you believe that she is a real goddess, don't you, Monsieur Pigeonneau?"

I protested against so unworthy a suspicion.

"To believe that would be fetichism."

Her great green eyes looked at me with surprise.

"Ah, then, you don't believe in fetichism? I did not think one could be an archæologist and yet not believe in fetichism. How can Pasht interest you if you do not believe that she is a goddess? But never mind! I came to see you on a matter of great importance, Monsieur Pigeonneau."

"Great importance?"

"Yes, about a costume. Look at me."

"With pleasure."

"Don't you find traces of the Cushite race in my profile?"

I was at loss what to say. An interview of this nature was so foreign to me.

"Oh, there's nothing surprising about it," she continued. "I remember when I was an Egyptian. And were you also an Egyptian, Monsieur Pigeonneau? Don't you remember? How very curious. At least, you don't doubt that we pass through a series of successive incarnations?"

"I do not know."

"You surprise me, Monsieur Pigeonneau."

"Will you tell me, Madam, to what I am indebted for this honour?"

"To be sure. I haven't yet told you that I have come to beg you to help me to design an Egyptian costume for the fancy ball at Countess N——'s. I want a costume that shall be absolutely accurate and bewilderingly beautiful. I have been hard at work at it already, M. Pigeonneau. I have gone over my recollections, for I remember very well when I lived in Thebes six thousand years ago. I have had designs sent to me from London, Boulak and New York."

"Those would, of course, be more reliable."

"No, nothing is so reliable as one's intuition. I have also studied in the Egyptian Museum of the Louvre. It is full of enchanting things. Figures so slender and pure, profiles so delicate and clear

cut, women who look like flowers, but, at the same time, with something at once rigid and supple. And a god, Bes, who looks like Sarcey! My goodness, how beautiful it all is!"

"Pardon me, but I do not yet quite understand——"

"I haven't finished. I went to your lecture on the toilet of a woman of the Middle Empire, and I took notes. It was rather dry, your lecture, but I grubbed away at it. By aid of all these notes I have designed a costume. But it is not quite right yet. So I have come to beg you to correct it. Do come to me to-morrow! Will you? Do me that honour for the love of Egypt! You will, won't you? Till to-morrow, I must hurry off. Mama is in the carriage waiting for me."

She disappeared as she said these last words, and I followed. When I reached the vestibule she was already at the foot of the stairs and from here I heard her clear voice call up:

"Till to-morrow. Avenue du Bois-de-Boulogne, at the corner of the Villa Saïd."

"I shall not go to see this mad creature," I said to myself.

The next afternoon at four o'clock I rang the door-bell. A footman led me into an immense, well-lighted hall crowded with pictures and statues in

marble and bronze; sedan chairs in *Vernis Martin* set with porcelain plaques; Peruvian mummies; a dozen dummy figures of men and horses in full armour, over which, by reason of their great height, towered a Polish cavalier with white wings on his shoulders and a French knight equipped for the tournament, his helmet bearing a crest of a woman's head with pointed coif and flowing veil.

An entire grove of palm-trees in tubs reared their foliage in this hall, and in their midst was seated a gigantic Buddha in gold. At the foot of the god sat a shabbily dressed old woman reading a Bible.

I was still dazzled by these many marvels when the purple hangings were raised and Miss Morgan appeared in a white *peignoir* trimmed with swansdown. She was followed by two great, long-muzzled boarhounds.

"I was sure you would come, Monsieur Pigeonneau."

I stammered a compliment.

"How could one possibly refuse anything to so charming a lady?"

"O, it is not because I am pretty that I am never refused anything. I have secrets by which I make myself obeyed."

Then, pointing to the old lady who was reading the Bible, she said to me:

"Pay no attention to her, that is mama. I shall not introduce you. Should you speak she could not reply; she belongs to a religious sect which forbids unnecessary conversation. It is the very latest thing in sects. Its adherents weàr sackcloth and eat out of wooden basins. Mama greatly enjoys these little observances. But you can imagine that I did not ask you here to talk to you about màma. I will put on my Egyptian costume. I shan't be long. In the meantime you might look at these little things."

And she made me sit down before a cabinet containing a mummy-case, several statuettes of the Middle Empire, a number of scarabs, and some beautiful fragments of a ritual for the burial of the dead.

Left alone, I examined the papyrus with the more interest, inasmuch as it was inscribed with a name I had already discovered on a seal. It was the name of a scribe of King Seti I. I immediately applied myself to noting the various interesting peculiarities the document exhibited.

I was plunged in this occupation for a longer time than I could accurately measure, when I was warned by a kind of instinct that some one was behind me. I turned and saw a marvellous being, her head surmounted by a gold hawk and the pure and adorable lines of her young body revealed by a

clinging white sheath. Over this a transparent rose-coloured tunic, bound at the waist by a girdle of precious stones, fell and separated into symmetrical folds. Arms and feet were bare and loaded with rings.

She stood before me, her head turned twards her right shoulder in a hieratic attitude which gave to her delicious beauty something indescribably divine.

"What! Is that you, Miss Morgan?"

"Unless it is Neferu-Ra in person. You remember the Neferu-Ra of Leconte de Lisle, the Beauty of the Sun?"

" 'Pallid and pining on her virgin bed,
Swathed in fine lawns from dainty foot to head.' *

"But of course you don't know. You know nothing of verse. And yet verses are so pretty. Come! Let's go to work."

Having mastered my emotion, I made some remarks to this charming young person about her enchanting costume. I ventured to criticise certain details as departing from archæological accuracy. I proposed to replace certain gems in the setting of the rings by others more universally in use in the

* "Voici qu'elle languit sur son lit virginal,
Très pâle, enveloppée avec des fines toiles."

Middle Empire. Finally I decidedly opposed the wearing of a clasp of *cloisonné* enamel. In fact, this jewel was a most odious anachronism. We at last agreed to replace this by a boss of precious stones deep set in fine gold. She listened with great docility, and seemed so pleased with me that she even asked me to stay to dinner. I excused myself because of my regular habits and the simplicity of my diet and took my leave. I was already in the vestibule when she called after me:

"Well, now, is my costume sufficiently smart? How mad I shall make all the other women at the Countess's ball!"

I was shocked at the remark. But having turned towards her I saw her again, and again I fell under her spell.

She called me back.

"Monsieur Pigeonneau," she said, "you are such a dear man! Write me a little story and I will love you ever and ever and ever so much!"

"I don't know how," I replied.

She shrugged her shoulders and exclaimed:

"What is the use of science if it can't help you to write a story! You must write me a story, Monsieur Pigeonneau."

Thinking it useless to repeat my absolute refusal I took my leave without replying.

At the door I passed the man with the Assyrian beard, Dr. Daoud, whose glance had so strangely affected me under the cupola of the Institute.

He struck me as being of the commonest class, and I found it very disagreeable to meet him again.

The Countess N——'s ball took place about fifteen days after my visit. I was not surprised to read in the newspaper that the beautiful Miss Morgan had created a sensation in the costume of Neferu-Ra.

During the rest of the year 1886 I did not hear her mentioned again. But on the first day of the New Year, as I was writing in my study, a man-servant brought me a letter and a basket.

"From Miss Morgan," he explained, and went away. I heard a mewing in the basket which had been placed on my writing table, and when I opened it out sprang a little grey cat.

It was not an Angora. It was a cat of some Oriental breed, much more slender than ours, and with a striking resemblance, so far as I could judge, to those of his race found in great numbers in the subterranean tombs of Thebes, their mummies swathed in coarse mummy-wrappings. He shook himself, gazed about, arched his back, yawned, and then rubbed himself, purring against the goddess Pasht, who stood on my table in all her purity of

form and her delicate, pointed face. Though his colour was dark and his fur short, he was graceful, and he seemed intelligent and quite tame. I could not imagine the reason for such a curious present, nor did Miss Morgan's letter greatly enlighten me. It was as follows:

"Dear Sir,

"I am sending you a little cat which Dr. Daoud brought back from Egypt, and of which I am very fond. Treat him well for my sake, Baudelaire, the greatest French poet after Stéphane Mallarmé, has said:

> 'The ardent lover and the unbending sage,
> Alike companion in their ripe old age,
> With the sleek arrogant cat, the household's pride,
> Slothful and chilly by the warm fireside.' *

"I need hardly remind you that you must write me a story. Bring it on Twelfth Night. We will dine together.

"Annie Morgan.

"P.S.—Your little cat's name is Porou."

Having read this letter, I looked at Porou who,

* "Les amoureux fervents et les savants austères
Aiment également, dans leur mûre saison,
Les chats puissants et doux, orgueil de la maison,
Qui comme eux sont frileux et comme eux sédentaires."

standing on his hind legs, was licking the black face of Pasht, his divine sister. He looked at me, and I must confess that of the two of us he was the less astonished. I asked myself, "What does this mean?" But I soon gave up trying to understand.

"It is expecting too much of myself to try and discover reason in the follies of this madcap," I thought. "I must get to work again. As for this little animal, Madam Magloire my housekeeper can provide for his needs."

Whereupon I resumed my work on a chronology, all the more interesting as it gave me the opportunity to abuse somewhat my distinguished colleague, Monsieur Maspéro. Porou did not leave my table. Seated on his haunches, his ears pricked, he watched me write, and strange to say I accomplished no good work that day. My ideas were all in confusion; there came to my mind scraps of songs and odds and ends of fairy-tales, and I went to bed very dissatisfied with myself. The next morning I again found Porou, seated on my writing-table, licking his paws. That day again I worked very badly; Porou and I spent the greater part of the day watching each other. The next morning it was the same, and also the morning after; in short, the whole week. I ought to have been distressed, but I must confess that little by little I began to resign myself

to my ill-luck, not only with patience, but even with some amusement. The rapidity with which a virtuous man becomes depraved is something terrible. The morning preceding Twelfth Night, which fell on a Sunday, I rose in high spirits and hurried to my writing-table, where, according to his custom, Porou, had already preceded me. I took a handsome copy-book of white paper and dipped my pen into the ink and wrote in big letters, under the watchful observation of my new friend:

"The Misadventures of a one-eyed Porter."

Thereupon, without ceasing to look at Porou, I wrote all day long in the most prodigious haste a story of such astonishing adventures, so charming and so varied that I was myself vastly entertained. My one-eyed porter mixed up all his parcels and committed the most absurd mistakes. Lovers in critical situations received from him, and quite without his knowledge, the most unexpected aid. He transported wardrobes in which men were concealed, and he placed them in other houses, frightening old ladies almost to death. But how describe so merry a story! While writing I burst out laughing at least twenty times. If Porou did not laugh, his solemn silence was quite as amusing as the most uproarious hilarity. It was already seven o'clock in the evening when I wrote the final line of this de-

lightful story. During the last hour the room had only been lighted by Porou's phosphorescent eyes. And yet I had written with as much ease in the darkness as by the light of a good lamp. My story finished, I proceeded to dress. I put on my evening clothes and my white tie, and, taking leave of Porou, I hurried downstairs into the street. I had hardly gone twenty steps when I felt some one pull at my sleeve.

"Where are you running to, uncle, just like a somnambulist?"

It was my nephew Marcel who hailed me in this fashion. He is an honest, intelligent young man, and a house-surgeon at the Salpêtrière. People say that he has a successful medical career before him. And indeed he would be clever enough if he would only be more on his guard against his whimsical imagination.

"Why, I am on my way to Miss Morgan, to take her a story I have just written."

"What, uncle! You write stories, and you know Miss Morgan? She is very pretty. And do you also know Dr. Daoud who follows her about everywhere?"

"A quack, a charlatan!"

"Possibly, uncle, and yet, unquestionably a most extraordinary experimentalist. Neither Bernheim

nor Liégeois, not even Charcot himself, has obtained the phenomena he produces at will. He induces the hypnotic condition and control by suggestion without contact, and without any direct agency, through the intervention of an animal. He commonly makes use of little short-haired cats for his experiments.

"This is how he goes to work: he suggests an action of some kind to a cat, then he sends the animal in a basket to the subject he wishes to influence. The animal transmits the suggestion he has received, and the patient under the influence of the beast does exactly what the operator desires."

"Is this true?"

"Yes, quite true, uncle."

"And what is Miss Morgan's share in these interesting experiments?"

"Miss Morgan employs Dr. Daoud to work for her, and she makes use of hypnotism and suggestion to induce people to make fools of themselves, as if her beauty was not quite enough."

I did not stop to listen any longer. An irresistible force hurried me on towards Miss Morgan.

THE DAUGHTER OF LILITH

TO JEAN PSICHARI

THE DAUGHTER OF LILITH

HAD left Paris late in the evening, and I spent a long, silent and snowy night in the corner of the railway carriage. I waited six mortal hours at X——, and the next afternoon I found nothing better than a farm-wagon to take me to Artigues. The plain whose furrows rose and fell by turns on either side of the road, and which I had seen long ago lying radiant in the sunshine, was now covered with a heavy veil of snow over which straggled the twisted black stems of the vines. My driver gently urged on his old horse, and we proceeded through an infinite silence broken only at intervals by the plaintive cry of a bird, sad even unto death. I murmured this prayer in my heart: "My God, God of Mercy, save me from despair and after so many transgressions, let me not commit the one sin Thou dost not forgive." Then I saw the sun, red and rayless, blood-hued, descending on the horizon, as it were, the sacred Host, and remembering the divine Sacrifice of Calvary, I felt hope enter into my soul. For some time longer the wheels crunched the snow. At last the driver

pointed with the end of his whip to the spire of Artigues as it rose like a shadow against the dull red haze.

"I say," said the man, "are you going to stop at the presbytery? You know the curé?"

"I have known him ever since I was a child. He was my master when I was a student."

"Is he learned in books?"

"My friend, M. Safrac, is as learned as he is good."

"So they say. But they also say other things."

"What do they say, my friend?"

"They say what they please, and I let them talk."

"What more do they say?"

"Well, there are those who say he is a sorcerer, and that he can tell fortunes."

"What nonsense!"

"For my part I keep a still tongue! But if M. Safrac is not a sorcerer and fortune-teller, why does he spend his time reading books?"

The waggon stopped in front of the presbytery.

I left the idiot, and followed the curé's servant, who conducted me to her master in a room where the table was already laid. I found M. Safrac greatly changed in the three years since I had last seen him. His tall figure was bent. He was excessively emaciated. Two piercing eyes glowed in

his thin face. His nose, which seemed to have grown longer, descended over his shrunken lips. I fell into his arms.

"My father, my father," I cried, sobbing, "I have come to you because I have sinned. My father, my dear old master, whose profound and mysterious knowledge overawed my mind, and who yet reassured it with a revelation of material tenderness, save your child from the brink of a precipice. O my only friend, save me; enlighten me, you my only beacon!"

He embraced me, and smiled on me with that exquisite kindness of which he had given so many proofs during my childhood, and then he stepped back, as if to see me better.

"Well, adieu!" he said, greeting me according to the custom of his country, for M. Safrac was born on the banks of the Garonne, in the home of those famous wines which seemed the symbol of his own generous and fragrant soul.

After having taught philosophy with great distinction in Bordeaux, Poitiers and Paris, he asked as his only reward the gift of a poor cure in the country where he had been born and where he wished to die. He had now been priest at Artigues for six years, and in this obscure village he practised the most humble piety and the most enlightened sciences.

"Well, adieu! my child," he repeated. "You wrote me a letter to announce your coming which has moved me deeply. It is true, then, that you have not forgotten your old master?"

I tried to throw myself at his feet.

"Save me! save me!" I stammered.

But he stopped me with a gesture at once imperious and gentle.

"You shall tell me to-morrow, Ary, what you have to tell. First, warm yourself. Then we will have supper, for you must be very hungry and very thirsty."

The servant placed on the table the soup-tureen out of which rose a fragrant column of steam. She was an old woman, her hair hidden under a black kerchief, and in her wrinkled face were strongly mingled the beauty of race and the ugliness of decay. I was in profound distress, and yet the peace of this saintly dwelling, the gaiety of the wood fire, the white table-cloth, the wine and the steaming dishes entered, little by little, into my soul. Whilst I ate I nearly forgot that I had come to the fireside of this priest to exchange the sereness of remorse for the fertilising dew of repentance. Monsieur Safrac reminded me of the hours, already long since past, which we had spent together in the college when he had taught philosophy.

"You, Ary," he said to me, "were my best pupil. Your quick intelligence was always in advance of the thought of the teacher. For that reason I at once became attached to you. I like a Christian to be daring. Faith should not be timid when unbelief shows an indominable audacity. The Church nowadays has lambs only; and it needs lions. Who will give us back those learned fathers and doctors whose erudition embraced all sciences? Truth is like the sun; it requires the eye of an eagle to contemplate it."

"Ah, M. Safrac, you brought to bear on all questions that daring vision which nothing dazzles. I remember that your opinions sometimes even startled those of your colleagues whom the holiness of your life filled with admiration. You did not fear new ideas. Thus, for instance, you were inclined to admit the plurality of inhabited worlds."

His eyes kindled.

"What will the cowards say when they read my book? I have meditated, and I have worked under this beautiful sky, in this land which God has created with a special love. You know that I have some knowledge of Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, and certain of the Indian dialects. You also know that I have brought here a library rich in ancient manuscripts. I have plunged profoundly into the knowl-

edge of the tongues and traditions of the primitive East. This great work, by the help of God, will not have been in vain. I have nearly finished my book on 'Origins,' which re-establishes and upholds that Biblical exegesis of which an impious science already foresaw the imminent overthrow. God in His mercy has at last permitted science and faith to be reconciled. To effect this reconciliation I have started with the following premises:

"The Bible, inspired by the Holy Ghost, tells only the truth, but it does not tell all the truth. And how could it, seeing that its only object is to inform us of what is needful for our eternal salvation? Apart from this great purpose it has no other. Its design is as simple as it is infinite. It includes the fall and the redemption; it is the sacred history of man; it is complete and restricted. Nothing has been admitted to satisfy profane curiosity. A godless science must not be permitted to triumph any longer over the silence of God. It is time to say, 'No, the Bible has not lied, because it has not revealed all.' That is the truth which I proclaim. By the help of geology, prehistoric archæology, the Oriental cosmogonies, Hittite and Sumerian monuments, Chaldean and Babylonian traditions preserved in the Talmud, I assert the existence of the pre-Adamites, of whom the inspired writer of Gene-

sis does not speak, for the only reason that their existence did not bear upon the eternal salvation of the children of Adam. Furthermore, a minute study of the first chapters of Genesis has proved to me the existence of two successive creations separated by untold ages, of which the second is only, so to speak, the adaptation of a corner of the earth to the needs of Adam and his posterity.

He paused, then he continued in a low voice and with a solemnity truly religious:

"I, Martial Safrac, unworthy priest, doctor of theology, submissive as an obedient child to the authority of our Holy Mother the Church, I assert with absolute certainty—yielding all due submission to our holy father the Pope and the Councils—that Adam, who was created in the image of God, had two wives, of whom Eve was the second."

These singular words drew me little by little out of myself and filled me with a curious interest. I therefore felt something of disappointment when M. Safrac, planting his elbows on the table, said to me:

"Enough on that subject. Some day, perhaps, you will read my book, which will enlighten you on this point. I was obliged, in obedience to strict duty, to submit the work to Monseigneur, and to beg his Grace's approval. The manuscript is at present in the archbishop's hands, and any minute I

may expect a reply which I have every reason to believe will be favourable. My dear child, try those mushrooms out of our own woods, and this native wine of ours, and acknowledge that this is the second promised land, of which the first was only the image and the forecast."

From this time on our conversation, grown more familiar, ranged over our common recollections.

"Yes, my child," said M. Safrac, "you were my favourite pupil, and God permits preferences if they are founded on impartial judgment. So I decided at once that there was in you the making of a man and a Christian. Not that great imperfections were not in evidence. You were irresolute, uncertain, and easily disconcerted. Passions, so far latent, smouldered in your soul. I loved you because of your great restlessness, as I did another of my pupils for quite opposite qualities. I loved Paul d'Ervy for his unswerving steadfastness of mind and heart."

At this name I blushed and turned pale and with difficulty suppressed a cry, and when I tried to answer I found it impossible to speak. M. Safrac appeared not to notice my distress.

"If I remember aright, he was your best friend," he added. "You have remained intimate ever since, have you not? I know he has started on a

diplomatic career, and a great future is predicted for him. I hope that in happier times than the present he may be entrusted with office at the Holy See. In him you have a faithful and devoted friend."

" My father," I replied, with a great effort, "tomorrow I will speak to you of Paul d'Ervy and of another person."

M. Safrac pressed my hand. We separated, and I went to the room which had been prepared for me. In my bed, fragrant with lavender, I dreamed that I was once again a child, and that as I knelt in the college chapel I was admiring the blonde and ecstatic women with which the gallery was filled, when suddenly out of a cloud over my head I seemed to hear a voice say:

"Ary, you believe that you love them in God, but it is God you love in them."

The next morning when I woke I found M. Safrac standing at the side of my bed.

"Come, Ary, and hear the Mass which I am about to celebrate for your intention. After the Holy Sacrifice I shall be ready to listen to what you have to say."

The Church of Artigues was a little sanctuary in the Norman style which still flourished in Aquitaine in the twelfth century. Restored some twenty

years ago, it had received the addition of a bell-tower which had not been contemplated in the original plan. At any rate, poverty had safeguarded its pure bareness. I tried to join in the prayers of the celebrant as much as my thoughts would permit, and then I returned with him to the presbytery. Here we breakfasted on a little bread and milk, after which we went to M. Safrac's room.

He drew a chair to the fireplace, over which hung a crucifix, and invited me to be seated, and seating himself beside me he signed to me to speak. Outside the snow fell. I began as follows:

"My father, it is ten years ago since I left your care and entered the world. I have preserved my faith, but, alas, not my purity. But it is unnecessary to remind you of my life; you know it, you my spiritual guide, the only keeper of my conscience. Moreover, I am in haste to arrive at the event which has convulsed my being. Last year my family had decided that I must marry, and I myself had willingly consented. The young girl destined for me united all the advantages of which parents are usually in search. More than that, she was pretty; she pleased me to such a degree that instead of a marriage of convenience I was about to make a marriage of affection. My offer was accepted, and we were betrothed. The happiness and peace of

my life seemed assured when I received a letter from Paul d'Ervy who had returned from Constantinople and announced his arrival in Paris. He expressed a great desire to see me. I hurried to him and announced my marriage. He congratulated me heartily.

" 'My dear old boy,' he said, 'I rejoice in your happiness.'

"I told him that I counted on him to be my witness and he willingly consented. The date of my wedding was fixed for May 15, and he was not obliged to return to his post until the beginning of June.

" 'How lucky that is,' I said to him. 'And you?'

" 'Oh, I,' he replied, with a smile which expressed in turn joy and sorrow, 'I—what a change! I am mad—a woman—Ary. I am either very fortunate or very unfortunate! What name can one give to a happiness gained by an evil action? I have betrayed, I have broken the heart of a good friend . . . I carried off—yonder—in Constantinople——"

M. Safrac interrupted me:

"My son, leave out of your narrative the faults of others and name no one."

I promised to obey, and continued as follows:

"Paul had hardly ceased speaking when a woman entered the room. Evidently it was she; dressed in a long blue *peignoir*, she seemed to be at home. I will describe to you in one word the terrible impression she produced on me: she did not seem *natural.* I realise how vague is this expression and how inadequately it explains my meaning. But perhaps it will become more intelligible in the course of my story. But, indeed, in the expression of her golden eyes, that seemed at times to throw out sparks of light, in the curve of her enigmatical mouth, in the substance of her skin, at once brown and yet luminous, in the play of the angular and yet harmonious lines of her body, in the ethereal lightness of her footsteps, even in her bare arms, to which invisible wings seemed attached, and, finally, in her ardent and magnetic personality, I felt an indescribable something foreign to the nature of humanity; an indescribable something inferior and yet superior to the woman God has created in his formidable goodness, so that she should be our companion in this earthly exile. From the moment I saw her one feeling alone overmastered my soul and pervaded it; I felt a profound revulsion from everything that was not this woman.

"Seeing her enter, Paul frowned slightly, but changing his mind, he made an effort to smile.

" 'Leila, I wish to present to you my best friend.'

"Leila replied:

" 'I know M. Ary.'

"These words could not but seem strange as we had certainly never seen each other before; but the voice with which they were uttered was stranger still.

"If crystal could utter thought, so it would speak.

" 'My friend Ary,' continued Paul, 'is to be married in six weeks.'

"At these words Leila looked at me and I saw distinctly that her golden eyes said 'No!'

"I went away greatly disturbed, nor did my friend show the slightest desire to detain me. All that day I wandered aimlessly through the streets, my heart empty and desolate; then, towards night, finding myself in front of a florist's shop, I remembered my *fiancée,* and went in to get her a spray of white lilac. I had hardly taken hold of the flowers when a little hand tore them out of my grasp, and I saw Leila, who turned away laughing. She wore a short grey dress and a jacket of the same colour and a small round hat. I must confess that this costume of a Parisian dressed for walking was most unbecoming to her fairy-like beauty and seemed a kind of disguise. And yet, seeing her so, I felt that I loved

her with an undying love. I tried to rejoin her, but I lost her among the crowd and the carriages.

"From this time on I seemed to cease to live. I called several times at Paul's without seeing Leila again. He always received me in a friendly manner, but he never spoke of her. We had nothing to say to each other, and I was sad when we parted. At last, one day, the footman said that his master was out. He added 'Perhaps you would like to see Madame?' I replied 'Yes.' O, my father, what tears of blood can ever atone for this little word! I entered. I found her in the drawing-room, half reclining on a couch, in a dress as yellow as gold, under which she had drawn her little feet. I saw her—but, no, I saw nothing. My throat was suddenly parched, I could not utter a word. A fragrance of myrrh and aromatic perfumes which emanated from her seemed to intoxicate me with languor and longing, as if at once all the odours of the mystic East had penetrated my quivering nostrils. No, this was certainly not a natural woman, for nothing human seemed to emanate from her. Her face expressed no emotion, either good or bad, beyond a voluptuousness at once sensual and divine. She doubtless noticed my suffering, for she asked with a voice as clear as the ripple of a mountain brook:

" 'What ails you?'

"I threw myself in tears at her feet and cried, 'I love you madly!'

"She opened her arms; then enfolding me with a lingering glance of her candid and voluptuous eyes:

" 'Why have you not told me this before?'

"Indescribable moment! I held Leila in my arms. It seemed as if we two together had been transported to Heaven and filled all its spaces. I felt myself become the equal of God, and my breast seemed to enfold all the beauty of earth and the harmonies of nature—the stars and the flowers, the forests that sing, the rivers and the deep seas. I had enfolded the infinite in a kiss. . . ."

At these words Monsieur Safrac, who had listened to me for some moments with growing impatience rose, and standing before the fireplace, lifted his cassock to his knees to warm his legs and said with a severity which came near being disdain:

"You are a wretched blasphemer, and instead of despising your crimes, you only confess them because of your pride and delight in them. I will listen no more."

At these words I burst into tears and begged his forgiveness. Recognising that my humility was sincere, he desired me to continue my confession on condition that I realised my own self-abasement.

I continued my story as follows, determined to make it as brief as possible:

"My father, I was torn by remorse when I left Leila. But, from the following day on, she came to me, and then began a life which tortured me with joy and anguish. I was jealous of Paul, whom I had betrayed, and I suffered cruelly.

"I do not believe that there is a more debasing evil than jealousy, nor one which fills the soul with more degrading thoughts. Even to console me Leila scorned to lie. Besides, her conduct was incomprehensible. I do not forget to whom I am speaking, and I shall be careful not to offend the ears of the most revered of priests. I can only say that Leila seemed ignorant of the love she permitted. But she had enveloped my whole being in the poison of sensuality. I could not exist without her, and I trembled at the thought of losing her.

"Leila seemed absolutely devoid of what we call moral sense. You must not, however, think that she was either wicked or cruel. On the contrary, she was gentle and compassionate. Nor was she without intelligence, but her intelligence was not of the same nature as ours. She said little, and she refused to reply to any questions that were asked her about her past. She was ignorant of all that we

know. On the other hand, she knew many things of which we are ignorant.

"Educated in the East, she was familiar with all sorts of Hindoo and Persian legends, which she would repeat with a certain monotonous cadence and with an infinite grace. Listening to her as she described the charming dawn of the world, one would have said she had lived in the youth of creation. This I once said to her.

" 'It is true, I am old,' " she answered smiling.

M. Safrac, still standing in front of the fireplace, had for some time bent towards me in an attitude of keen attention.

"Continue," he said.

"Often, my father, I questioned Leila about her religion. She replied that she had none, and that she had no need of one; that her mother and sisters were the daughters of God, but that they were not bound to Him by any creed. She wore a medallion about her neck filled with a little red earth which she said she had piously gathered because of her love for her mother.

Hardly had I uttered these words when M. Safrac, pale and trembling, sprang forward, and, seizing my arm, *shouted:*

"She told the truth! I know now. I know who

this creature was, Ary! Your instinct did not deceive you. It was not a woman. Continue, continue, I implore."

"My father, I have nearly finished. Alas, for Leila's love, I had broken my solemn plighted troth, I had betrayed my best friend. I had affronted God. Paul, having heard of Leila's faithlessness, became mad with grief. He threatened her with death, but she replied gently:

" 'Kill me, my friend; I long to die, but I cannot.'

"For six months she gave herself to me; then one morning she said that she was about to return to Persia, and that she would never see me again. I wept, I moaned, I raved: 'You have never loved me!'

" 'No, my friend,' she replied gently. 'And yet how many women who have loved you no better have denied you what you received from me! You still owe me some gratitude. Farewell.'

"For two days I was plunged in alternate fury and apathy. Then remembering the salvation of my soul, I hurried to you, my father. Here I am. Purify me, uplift me, strengthen my heart, for I love her still."

I ceased. M. Safrac, his hand raised to his forehead, remained lost in thought. He was the first to break the silence.

"My son, this confirms my great discovery. What you tell me will confound the vainglory of our modern sceptics. Listen to me. We live to-day in the midst of miracles as did the first-born of men. Listen, listen! Adam, as I have already told you, had a first wife whom the Bible does not make mention of, but of whom the Talmud speaks. Her name was Lilith. Created, not out of one of his ribs, but from this same red earth out of which he himself had been kneaded, she was not flesh of his flesh. She voluntarily separated from him. He was still living in innocence when she left him to go to those regions where long years afterwards the Persians settled, but which at this time were inhabited by the pre-Adamites, more intelligent and more beautiful than the sons of men. She therefore had no part in the transgression of our first father, and was unsullied by that original sin. Because of this she also escaped from the curse pronounced against Eve and her descendants. She is exempt from sorrow and death; having no soul to be saved, she is incapable of virtue or vice. Whatever she does, she accomplishes neither good nor evil. The daughters that were born to her of some mysterious wedlock are immortal as she is, and free as she is both in their deeds and thoughts, seeing that they can neither gain nor lose in the sight of

God. Now, my son, I recognise by indisputable signs that the creature who caused your downfall, this Leila, was a daughter of Lilith. Compose yourself to prayer. To-morrow I will hear you in confession."

He remained silent for a moment, then drawing a paper out of his pocket, he continued:

"Late last night, after having wished you good night, the postman, who had been delayed by the snow, brought me a very distressing letter. The senior vicaire informs me that my book has been a source of grief to Monseigneur, and has already overshadowed the spiritual joy with which he looked forward to the festival of our Lady of Mount Carmel. The work, he adds, is full of foolhardy doctrines and opinions which have already been condemned by the authorities. His Grace could not approve of such unwholesome lucubrations. This, then, is what they write to me. But I will relate your story to Monseigneur. It will prove to him that Lilith exists and that I do not dream."

I implored Monsieur Safrac to listen to me a moment more.

"When she went away, my father, Leila left me a leaf of cypress on which certain characters which I cannot decipher had been traced with the point of a style. It seems to be a kind of amulet."

Monsieur Safrac took the light film which I held out to him and examined it carefully.

"This," he said, "is written in Persian of the best period and can be easily translated thus:

"THE PRAYER OF LEILA, DAUGHTER OF LILITH

"My God, promise me death, so that I may taste of life. My God, give me remorse, so that I may at last find happiness. My God, make me the equal of the daughters of Eve."

LAETA ACILIA

TO ARY RENAN

LAETA ACILIA

AETA ACILIA lived in Marseilles during the reign of the Emperor Tiberius. She had been married for several years to a Roman noble named Helvius, but she had no children, though she longed passionately to become a mother. One day as she went to the temple to pray to the gods she found the entrance crowded by a band of men, half naked, emaciated and devoured by leprosy and ulcers. She paused in terror on the lowest step of the temple. Laeta Acilia was not without compassion. She pitied the poor creatures, but she was afraid of them. Nor had she ever seen beggars as wild looking as those who at this moment crowded before her, livid, lifeless, their empty wallets flung at their feet. She grew pale and held her hand to her heart; she could neither advance nor escape, and she felt her limbs giving way under her when a woman of striking beauty detached herself from these unfortunates and came towards her.

"Fear nothing, young woman," and the unknown spoke in a voice both grave and tender, "the men you see here are not cruel. They are the bearers

not of falsehood and evil, but of truth and love. We have come from Judaea, where the Son of God has died and risen again. When He ascended to the right hand of His Father those who believed in Him suffered cruel wrongs. Stephen was stoned by the people. As for us, the priests placed us on board a ship without sails or rudder, and we were delivered over to the waters of the sea to the end that we should perish. But the God who loved us in His mortal life mercifully led us to the harbour of this town. Alas! the people of Marseilles are avaricious, idolatrous and cruel. They permit the disciples of Jesus to die of hunger and cold. And had we not taken refuge in this temple, which they deem sacred, they would already have dragged us to their gloomy prisons. And yet it would have been well had they welcomed us, since we bring good tidings."

Having thus spoken the stranger held out her hand towards her companions and pointed to each in turn.

"That old man, lady," she said, "who turns on you his serene gaze, that is Cedon, he whom, though blind from birth, the Master healed. Cedon now sees with equal clearness things both visible and invisible. That other old man, whose beard is as white as the snow on the mountains, is Maximin. This man, still so young, and who yet seems so

weary, is my brother. He was possessed of great wealth in Jerusalem. Near him stand Martha my sister and Mantilla, the faithful servant who in happier days gathered olives on the hillsides of Bethany."

"And you," asked Laeta Acilia, "you whose voice is so soft and whose face is so beautiful, what is your name?"

The Jewess replied:

"I am called Mary Magdalen. I divined by the gold embroidery on your raiment, and the unconscious pride of your bearing, that your are the wife of one of the principal citizens of this town. For this reason I have approached you to the end that you may move the heart of your husband on behalf of the disciples of Jesus Christ. Say to this rich man: 'Lord, they are naked, let us clothe them; they are anhungered, and thirsty; let us give them bread and wine, and God will restore to us in His Kingdom what was borrowed from us in His name.' "

Laeta Acilia replied:

"Mary, I will do as you ask. My husband is named Helvius; he is of noble rank and one of the richest citizens of the town; never for long does he refuse what I desire, for he loves me. Your companions have now ceased, O Mary, to fill me

with fear. I shall even dare to pass close to them, though their limbs are polluted by ulcers, and I shall go to the temple to pray to the immortal gods to grant my wish. Alas; hitherto they have refused."

Mary, with arms outstretched, barred her way.

"Beware, lady," she cried, "of worshipping vain idols. Do not demand of images of stone words of hope and life. There is only one God, and with my hair I have wiped His feet."

At these words the flashing of her eyes, dark as the sky in a storm, mingled with tears, and Laeta Acilia said to herself:

"I am pious, and I faithfully perform the ceremonies religion demands, but in this woman there is a strange feeling of a love divine."

Mary Magdalen continued in ecstasy: "He was the God of Heaven and earth, and He uttered His parables seated on the bench by the threshold, under the shade of the old fig-tree. He was young and beautiful. He would have been glad to be loved. When he came to supper in my sister's house I sat at His feet, and the words flowed from His lips like the waters of a torrent. And when my sister complained of my sloth, saying: 'Master, tell her it is but right that she should aid me to prepare the supper,' He smiled and made excuse for me, and

permitted me to remain seated at His feet, and said that I had chosen the good part.

"One would have thought to see Him that He was but a young shepherd from the mountains, and yet His eyes flashed flames like those that issued from the brow of Moses. His gentleness was like the peace of night and His anger was more terrible than a thunderbolt. He loved the humble and the little ones. Along the roadside the children ran towards Him and clung to His garments. He was the God of Abraham and Jacob, and with the same hands that had created the sun and the stars, He caressed the cheeks of the newly born whom their happy mothers held out to Him from the thresholds of their cottages. He was himself as simple as a child, and He raised the dead to life. Here among my companions you see my brother whom He raised from the dead. Behold, lady! Lazarus bears on his face the pallor of death, and in his eyes is the horror of one who has seen hell."

But for some moments past Laeta Acilia had ceased to listen.

She raised towards the Jewess her candid eyes and her small, smooth forehead.

"Mary," she said, "I am a pious woman, attached to the faith of my fathers. Unbelief is evil for our

sex. And it does not beseem the wife of a Roman noble to accept new fashions in religions. And yet I must confess that there are some charming gods in the East. Your God, Mary, seems one of these. You have told me that He loves little children, and that He kisses them as they lie in the arms of their young mothers. By that I see that He is a God who is favourable to women, and I regret that He is not held in esteem among the aristocracy and the official classes, or I would gladly bring him offerings of honey-cakes. But, listen, Mary the Jewess, appeal to Him, you whom He loves, and demand of Him for me that which I dare not demand myself, which my goddesses have refused."

Laeta Acilia uttered these words with hesitation. She paused and blushed.

"What is it," Mary Magdalen asked eagerly, "and what desire, lady, has your unsatisfied soul?"

Gaining courage little by little, Laeta Acilia replied:

"Mary, you are a woman, and though I know you not, I yet may confide to you a woman's secret. During the six years that I have been married I have not had a child, and that is a great sorrow to me; I need a child to love; the love in my heart for the little creature I am awaiting, and who yet may never come, is stifling me. If your God, Mary

Magdalen, grants me through your intercession what my goddesses have denied me, I shall say that He is a good God, and I will love Him and I will make my friends love Him. And like us they are young and rich, and they belong to the first families of the town."

Mary Magdalen replied gravely:

"Daughter of the Romans, when you shall have received that for which you ask, may you remember this promise that you have made to the servant of Jesus."

"I shall remember," she replied. "In the meantime take this purse, Mary, and divide the money it contains among your companions. Farewell, I shall return to my house. As soon as I arrive I will send baskets full of bread and meat for you and your friends. Tell your brother and your sister and your friends that they may without fear leave the sanctuary where they have taken refuge and go to some inn on the outskirts of the town. Helvius, who has great influence in the town, will prevent any one molesting them. May the gods protect you, Mary Magdalen! When it shall please you to see me again ask of the passers-by for the house of Laeta Acilia; any of the citizens will be able to show you the way without trouble."

II

IT was six months later that Laeta Acilia, lying on the purple couch in the courtyard of her house, crooned a little song that had no sense and which her mother had sung before her. The water sang gaily in the fountain out of whose shallow basin rose young Tritons in marble, and the balmy air gently stirred the murmuring leaves of the old plane-tree. Tired, languid, happy, heavy as a bee leaving the orchard, the young woman crossed her arms over her rounded body, and, having ceased her song, glanced about her and sighed in the fulness of pride.

At her feet her black, white and yellow slaves were busy with needle, shuttle and spindle, vying with each other as they worked at the garments for the expected infant. Laeta stretched out her hand and took a little cap which an old slave laughingly offered her. She placed it on her closed hand and laughed in turn. It was a little cap of purple and gold, silver and pearls, and splendid as the dreams of a poor African slave.

At that moment a stranger entered this interior

court. She was clothed in a seamless garment of one piece, in colour like the dust of the roads. Her long hair was covered with ashes, but her face, worn by tears, still shone with glory and beauty.

The slaves, mistaking her for a beggar, were about to drive her away when Laeta Acilia, recognising her at the first glance, rose and ran towards her.

"Mary, Mary," she cried, "it is true that you were the favourite of a god. He whom you loved on earth has heard you in Heaven, and through your intercession He has granted my prayer. See," she added, and she showed her the little cap which she still held in her hand, "how happy I am and how grateful to you."

"I knew it," replied Mary Magdalen "and I have come, Laeta Acilia, to instruct you in the truth of Jesus Christ."

Thereupon the Marseillaise dismissed her slaves, and offered the Jewess an ivory armchair with cushions embroidered in gold. But Mary Magdalen, pushing it back with disgust, seated herself on the ground with feet crossed in the shade of the great plane-tree stirred by the murmuring breeze.

"Daughter of the Gentiles," she said, "you have not despised the disciples of the Lord. For this reason I will teach you to know Jesus as I know

Him, to the end that you shall love Him as I love Him. I was a sinner when I saw for the first time the most beautiful of the sons of men."

Thereupon she told how she had thrown herself at the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Leper, and how she had poured over the Master's adored feet all the ointment of spikenard contained in the alabaster vase. She repeated the words the gentle Master had uttered in reply to the murmurs of His rough disciples.

"Why do you reprove this woman?" He had said. "That which she has done is well done. For the poor ye have always with you, but Me ye have not always. She has with forethought anointed My body for My burial. I tell you in truth that in the whole world, wherever the Gospel is preached, shall be told what she has done, and she shall be praised."

She then described how Jesus had cast out the seven devils that had raged within her.

She added:

"Since then, enraptured and consumed by all the joys of faith and love, I have lived in the shadow of the Master as in a new Eden."

She told her of the lilies of the fields upon which they had gazed together, and of that infinite happiness, the happiness born of faith alone. Then she

described how He had been betrayed and put to death for the salvation of His people. She recalled the ineffable scenes of the passion, the burial and the resurrection.

"It was I," she cried, "it was I who of all was the first to see Him. I found two angels clad in white seated, one at the head, the other at the feet, where we had laid the body of Jesus. And they said to me: 'Woman, why weepest thou?' 'I weep because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.

"O joy! Jesus came towards me, and at first I thought He was the gardener. But he called me 'Mary' and I recognised His voice. I cried 'Master' and held out my arms, but He replied gently, 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.' "

As she listened to this narrative Laeta Acilia lost little by little her sense of joy and contentment. Recalling the past and examining her own life, it seemed to her very monotonous in comparison to the life of the woman who had loved a god. Young and pious and a patrician, her own red-letter days were those on which she had eaten cakes with her girl friends. Visits to the circus, the love of Helvius and her needle-work also counted in her life. But what were these all in comparison to the scenes

with which Mary Magdalen kindled her senses and her soul? She left her heart stifling with bitter jealousy and vague regrets.

She envied this Jewess, whose radiant beauty still glowed under the ashes of penitence, her divine adventures, and even her sorrows.

"Begone, Jewess!" she cried, forcing back her tears with her hands. "Begone! But a moment since I was so contented, I believed myself so happy. I did not know that there were other joys than those which were mine. I knew of no other love than that of my good Helvius, and I knew of no other holy joy than to celebrate the mysteries of the goddesses in the manner of my mother and of my grandmother. O, now I understand! Wicked woman, you wished to make me discontented with the life I have led. But you have not succeeded! Why have you come to tell me of your love for a visible God? Why do you boast before me of having seen the resurrection of the Master since I shall not see Him? You even hoped to spoil the joy that is mine in bearing a child. It was wicked! I refuse to know your God. You have loved Him too much! To please Him one is obliged to fall prostrate and dishevelled at His feet. That is not an attitude which beseems the wife of a noble! Helvius would be annoyed did I worship in such

a way. I will have nothing to do with a religion that disarranges one's hair! No indeed, I will not allow the little child I bear in my bosom to know your Christ! Should this poor little creature be a daughter she shall learn to love the little goddesses of baked clay that are not larger than my finger, and with these she can play without fear. These are the proper divinities for mothers and children. You are very audacious to boast of your love affairs and to ask me to share them. How could your God be mine? I have not led the life of a sinner, I have not been possessed of seven devils, nor have I frequented the highways. I am a respectable woman. Begone!"

And Mary Magdalen, perceiving that proselytising was not her vocation, retired to a wild cavern since called the Holy Grotto. The sacred historians believe unanimously that Laeta Acilia was not converted to the faith of Christ until many years after this interview which I have faithfully recorded.

A NOTE ON A POINT OF EXEGESIS

HAVE been reproached for having in this story confused Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha, and Mary Magdalen. I must confess at once that the Gospel seems to make of Mary who poured the perfume of spikenard over the feet of Jesus and of Mary to whom the Master said: "*Noli me tangere,*" two women absolutely distinct. Upon this point I am willing to make amends to those who have done me the honour to blame me.

Among the number is a princess who belongs to the Orthodox Greek Church. This does not in the least surprise me. The Greeks have always distinguished between the two Marys. It was not the same in the Western Church. On the contrary, the identity of the sister of Martha and Magdalen the sinner was early acknowledged.

The texts lend themselves but ill to this interpretation, but texts never present difficulties to any one but the pundits; the poetry of the people is more subtle than science: it can never be held in check, and it overcomes the obstacles which prove a stum-

bling block to criticism. By a happy turn of the imagination popular fancy has welded the two Marys together and thus created the marvellous type of Mary Magdalen. It has been made sacred by legend, and it is the legend which has inspired my little story. In this I consider myself above reproach. Nor is that all! I am able, even, to invoke the authority of the learned, and I may, without vanity, say that the Sorbonne is on my side. The Sorbonne declared on December 1, 1521, that there is but one Mary.

THE RED EGG

TO SAMUEL POZZI

THE RED EGG

R. N—— placed his coffee-cup on the mantelpiece, threw his cigar into the fire, and said to me:

"My dear friend, you recently told me of the strange suicide of a woman tortured by terror and remorse. Her nature was fine and she was exquisitely cultivated. Being suspected of complicity in a crime of which she had been the silent witness, in despair at her own irreparable cowardice, she was haunted by a perpetual nightmare in which her husband appeared to her dead and decomposing and pointing her out with his finger to the inquisitive magistrates. She was the victim of her own morbid imagination. In this condition an insignificant and casual circumstance decided her fate.

"Her nephew, a child, lived with her. One morning he was, as usual, studying his lessons in the dining-room where she happened to be. The child began to translate word by word a verse of Sophocles, and as he wrote he pronounced aloud both the Greek and the translation: Κάρα θεῖον, the head divine; Ἰοκάστης, of Jocasta; τέθνηκε, is dead. . .

σπῶσ' κομὴν, tearing her hair; καλεῖ, she calls; Λάϊον νεκρὸν. Laïos dead. . . εἰσεδομεν, we see; τὴν γυναῖκ' κρεμαστὴν, the woman hung. He added a flourish which tore the paper, stuck out his ink-stained tongue, and repeated in sing-song, 'Hung, hung, hung!"

"The wretched woman, whose will-power had been destroyed, passively obeyed the suggestion in the word, repeated three times. She rose, and without a word or look went straight to her room. Some hours later the police-inspector, called to verify a violent death, made this reflection: 'I have seen many women who have committed suicide, but this is the first time I have seen one who has hanged herself.'

"We speak of suggestion. Here is an instance which is at once natural and credible. I am a little doubtful, in spite of everything, of those which are arranged in the medical schools.

"But that a being in whom the will-power is dead obeys every external impulse is a truth which reason admits and which experience proves. The example which you cited reminds me of another one somewhat similar. It is that of my unfortunate comrade, Alexandre Le Mansel. A verse of Sophocles killed your heroine. A phrase of Lampridius destroyed the friend of whom I will tell you.

"Le Mansel, with whom I studied at the high school of Avranches, was unlike all his comrades. He seemed at once younger and older than he really was. Small and fragile, he was at fifteen years of age afraid of everything that alarms little children. Darkness caused him an overpowering terror, and he could never meet one of the servants of the school, who happened to have a big lump on the top of his head, without bursting into tears. And yet at times, when we saw him close at hand, he looked quite old. His parched skin, glued to his temples, nourished his thin hair very inadequately. His forehead was polished like that of a middle-aged man. As for his eyes, they had no expression, and strangers often thought he was blind. His mouth alone gave character to his face. His sensitive lips expressed in turn a child-like joy and strange sufferings. The sound of his voice was clear and charming. When he recited his lessons he gave the verses their full harmony and rhythm, which made us laugh very much. During recreation he willingly joined our games, and he was not awkward, but he played with such feverish enthusiasm, and yet he was so absent-minded, that some of us felt an insurmountable aversion towards him.

"He was not popular, and we would have made him our butt had he not rather overawed us by

something of savage pride and by his reputation as a clever scholar, for though he was unequal in his work he was often at the head of his class. It was said that he would often talk in his sleep, and would leave his bed in the dormitory while sound asleep. This, however, we had not observed for ourselves as we were at the age of sound sleep.

"For a long time he inspired me with more surprise than sympathy. Then of a sudden we became friends during a walk which the whole class took to the Abbey of Mont St. Michel. We tramped barefooted along the beach, carrying our shoes and our bread at the end of a stick and singing at the top of our voices. We passed the postern, and having thrown our bundles at the foot of the 'Michelettes,' we sat down side by side on one of those ancient iron cannons corroded by five centuries of rain and fog.

"Looking dreamily from the ancient stones to the sky, and swinging his bare feet, he said to me: 'Had I but lived in the time of those wars and been a knight, I would have captured these two old cannons; I would have captured twenty, I would have captured a hundred! I would have captured all the cannons of the English. I would have fought single-handed in front of this gate. And

the Archangel Michel would have stood guard over my head like a white cloud.'

"These words and the slow chant in which he uttered them thrilled me. I said to him, 'I would have been your squire. I like you, Le Mansel; will you be my friend?' And I held my hand out to him and he took it solemnly.

"At the master's command we put on our shoes, and our little band climbed the steep ascent that leads to the abbey. Midway, near a spreading fig-tree, we saw the cottage where Tiphaine Raguel, widow of Bertrand du Guesclin, lived in peril of the sea.

"This dwelling is so small that it is a wonder that it was ever inhabited. To have lived there the worthy Tiphaine must have been a queer old body, or, rather, a saint living only the spiritual life. Le Mansel opened his arms as if to embrace this sacred hut; then, falling on his knees, he kissed the stones, heedless of the laughter of his comrades who, in their merriment, began to pelt him with pebbles. I will not describe our walk among the dungeons, the cloisters, the halls and the chapel. Le Mansel seemed oblivious to everything. Indeed, I should not have recalled this incident except to show how our friendship began.

"In the dormitory the next morning I was awakened by a voice at my ear which said:

" 'Tiphaine is not dead.' I rubbed my eyes as I saw Le Mansel in his shirt at my side. I requested him rather rudely to let me sleep, and I thought no more of this singular communication.

"From that day on I understood the character of our fellow pupil much better than before, and I discovered an inordinate pride which I had never before suspected. It will not surprise you if I acknowledge that at the age of fifteen I was but a poor psychologist. But Le Mansel's pride was too subtle to strike one at once. It had no concrete shape, but seemed to embrace remote phantasms. And yet it influenced all his feelings and gave to his ideas, uncouth and incoherent though they were, something of unity.

"During the holidays that followed our walk to the Mont St. Michel, Le Mansel invited me to spend a day at the home of his parents, who were farmers and landowners at Saint Julien.

"My mother consented with some repugnance. Saint Julien is six kilometres from the town. Having put on a white waistcoat and a smart blue tie I started on my way there early one Sunday morning.

"Alexandre stood at the door waiting for me and smiling like a little child. He took me by the hand

and led me into the 'parlour.' The house, half country, half town-like, was neither poor nor ill furnished. And yet my heart was deeply oppressed when I entered, so great was the silence and sadness that reigned.

"Near the window, whose curtains were slightly raised as if to satisfy some timid curiosity, I saw a woman who seemed old, though I cannot be sure that she was as old as she appeared to be. She was thin and yellow, and her eyes, under their red lids glowed in their black sockets. Though it was summer her body and her head were shrouded in some black woollen material. But that which made her look most ghastly was a band of metal which encircled her forehead like a diadem.

" 'This is mama,' Le Mansel said to me, 'she has a headache.'

"Madam Le Mansel greeted me in a plaintive voice, and doubtless observing my astonished glance at her forehead, said, smiling:

" 'What I wear on my forehead, young sir, is not a crown; it is a magnetic band to cure my headache.' I did my best to reply when Le Mansel dragged me away to the garden, where we found a bald little man who flitted along the paths like a ghost. He was so thin and so light that there seemed some danger of his being blown away by the wind. His

timid manner and his long and lean neck, when he bent forward, and his head, no larger than a man's fist, his shy side-glances and his skipping gait, his short arms uplifted like a pair of flippers, gave him undeniably a great resemblance to a plucked chicken.

"My friend, Le Mansel, explained that this was his father, but that they were obliged to let him stay in the yard as he really only lived in the company of his chickens, and he had in their society quite forgotten to talk to human beings. As he spoke his father suddenly disappeared, and very soon an ecstatic clucking filled the air. He was with his chickens.

"Le Mansel and I strolled several times around the garden and he told me that at dinner, presently, I should see his grandmother, but that I was to take no notice of what she said, as she was sometimes a little out of her mind. Then he drew me aside into a pretty arbour and whispered, blushing:

" 'I have written some verses about Tiphaine Raguel. I'll repeat them to you some other time. You'll see, you'll see.'

"The dinner-bell rang and we went into the dining-room. M. Le Mansel came in with a basket full of eggs.

" 'Eighteen this morning,' he said, and his voice sounded like a cluck.

"A most delicious omelette was served. I was seated between Madame Le Mansel, who was moaning under her crown, and her mother, an old Normandy woman with round cheeks, who, having lost all her teeth, smiled with her eyes. She seemed very attractive to me. While we were eating roast-duck and chicken *á la crème* the good lady told us some very amusing stories, and, in spite of what her grandson had said, I did not observe that her mind was in the slightest degree affected. On the contrary, she seemed to be the life of the house.

"After dinner we adjourned to a little sitting-room whose walnut furniture was covered with yellow Utrecht velvet. An ornamental clock between two candelabra decorated the mantelpiece, and on the top of its black plinth, and protected and covered by a glass globe, was a red egg. I do not know why, once having observed it, I should have examined it so attentively. Children have such unaccountable curiosity. However, I must say that the egg was of a most wonderful and magnificent colour. It had no resemblance whatever to those Easter eggs dyed in the juice of the beetroot, so much admired by the urchins who stare in at the fruit-shops. It was of the colour of royal purple. And with the indiscretion of my age I could not resist saying as much.

"M. Le Mansel's reply was a kind of crow which expressed his admiration.

" 'That egg, young sir,' he added, 'has not been dyed as you seem to think. It was laid by a Cingalese hen in my poultry-yard just as you see it there. It is a phenomenal egg.'

" 'You must not forget to say,' Madame Le Mansel added in a plaintive voice, 'that this egg was laid the very day our Alexandre was born.'

" 'That's a fact,' M. Le Mansel assented.

"In the meantime the old grandmother looked at me with sarcastic eyes, and pressed her loose lips together and made a sign that I was not to believe what I heard.

" 'Humph!' she whispered, 'chickens often sit on what they don't lay, and if some malicious neighbour slips into their nest a——'

"Her grandson interrupted her fiercely. He was pale, and his hands shook.

" 'Don't listen to her,' he cried to me. 'You know what I told you. Don't listen!'

" 'It's a fact!' M. Le Mansel repeated, his round eye fixed in a side glance at the red egg.

"My further connection with Alexandre Le Mansel contains nothing worth relating. My friend often spoke of his verses to Tiphaine, but he never showed them to me. Indeed, I very soon lost sight

of him. My mother sent me to Paris to finish my studies. I took my degree in two faculties, and then I studied medicine. During the time that I was preparing my doctor's thesis I received a letter from my mother, who told me that poor Alexandre had been very ailing, and that after a serious attack he had become timid and excessively suspicious; that, however, he was quite harmless, and in spite of the disordered state of his health and reason he showed an extraordinary aptitude for mathematics. There was nothing in these tidings to surprise me. Often, as I studied the diseases of the nervous centres, my mind reverted to my poor friend at Saint Julien, and in spite of myself I foresaw for him the general paralysis which inevitably threatened the offspring of a mother racked by chronic nervous headaches and a rheumatic, addle-brained father.

"The sequel, however, did not, apparently, prove me to be in the right. Alexandre Le Mansel, as I heard from Avranches, regained his normal health, and as he grew towards manhood gave active proof of the brilliancy of his intellect. He worked with ardour at his mathematical studies, and he even sent to the Academy of Sciences solutions of several problems hitherto unsolved, which were found to be as elegant as they were accurate. Absorbed in his work, he rarely found time to write to me. His

letters were affectionate, clear, and to the point, and nothing could be found in them to arouse the mistrust of the most suspicious neurologist. However, very soon after this our correspondence ceased, and I heard nothing more of him for the next ten years.

"Last year I was greatly surprised when my servant brought me the card of Alexandre Le Mansel, and said that the gentleman was waiting for me in the ante-room.

"I was in my study consulting with a colleague on a matter of some importance. However, I begged him to excuse me for a moment while I hurried to greet my old friend. I found he had grown very old, bald, haggard, and terribly emaciated. I took him by the arm and led him into the *salon*.

" 'I am glad to see you again,' he said, 'and I have much to tell you. I am exposed to the most unheard-of persecutions. But I have courage, and I shall struggle bravely, and I shall triumph over my enemies.'

"These words disquieted me, as they would have disquieted in my place any other nerve specialist. I recognised a sympton of the disease which, by the fatal laws of heredity, menaced my friend, and which had appeared to be checked.

" 'My dear friend,' I said, 'we will talk about that presently. Wait here a moment. I just want

to finish something. In the meantime take a book and amuse yourself.'

"You know I have a great number of books, and my drawing-room contains about six thousand volumes in three mahogany book-cases. Why, then, should my unfortunate friend choose the very one likely to do him harm, and open it at that fatal page? I conferred some twenty minutes longer with my colleague, and having taken leave of him I returned to the room where I had left Le Mansel. I found the unfortunate man in the most fearful condition. He struck a book that lay open before him, which I at once recognised as a translation of the *Historia Augusta.* He recited at the top of his voice this sentence of Lampridius:

" 'On the day of the birth of Alexander Severus, a chicken, belonging to the father of the newly-born, laid a red egg—augury of the imperial purple to which the child was destined.'

"His excitement increased to fury. He foamed at the mouth. He cried: 'The egg, the egg of the day of my birth. I am an Emperor. I know that you want to kill me. Keep away, you wretch!' He strode down the room, then, returning, came towards me with open arms. 'My friend,' he said, 'my old comrade, what do you wish me to bestow on you? An Emperor—an Emperor. . . . My

father was right . . . . the red egg. I must be an Emperor! Scoundrel, why did you hide this book from me? This is a crime of high treason; it shall be punished! I shall be Emperor! Emperor! Yes, it is my duty. . . . Forward . . . . forward!"

"He was gone. In vain I tried to detain him. He escaped me. You know the rest. All the newspapers have described how, after leaving me, he bought a revolver and blew out the brains of the sentry who tried to prevent his forcing his way into the Elysée.

"And thus it happens that a sentence written by a Latin historian of the fourth century was the cause, fifteen hundred years after, of the death in our country of a wretched private soldier. Who will ever disentangle the web of cause and effect?

"Who can venture to say, as he accomplishes some simple act: 'I know what I am doing.' My dear friend, this is all I have to tell. The rest is of no interest except in medical statistics. Le Mansel, shut up in an insane asylum, remained for fifteen days a prey to the most violent mania. Whereupon he fell into a state of complete imbecility, during which he became so greedy that he even devoured the wax with which they polished the floor.

Three months later he was suffocated while trying to swallow a sponge."

The doctor ceased and lighted a cigarette. After a moment of silence, I said to him, "You have told me a terrible story, doctor."

"It is terrible," he replied, "but it is true. I should be glad of a little brandy."

HONEY-BEE

TO FLORENTIN LORIOT

HONEY-BEE

I

Which treats of the appearance of the country and serves as Introduction

HE sea covers to-day what was once the Duchy of Clarides. No trace of the town or the castle remains. But when it is calm there can be seen, it is said, within the circumference of a mile, huge trunks of trees standing on the bottom of the sea. A spot on the banks, which now serves as a station for the custom-house officers, is still called "The Tailor's Booth," and it is quite probable that this name is in memory of a certain Master Jean who is mentioned in this story. The sea, which encroaches year by year, will soon cover this spot so curiously named.

Such changes are in the nature of things. The mountains sink in the course of ages, and the depths of the seas on the contrary rise until their shells and corals are carried to the regions of clouds and ice.

Nothing endures. The face of land and sea is

for ever changing. Tradition alone preserves the memory of men and places across the ages and renders real to us what has long ceased to exist. In telling you of Clarides I wish to take you back to times that have long since vanished. Thus I begin:

The Countess of Blanchelande having placed on her golden hair a little black hood embroidered with pearls. . . .

But before proceeding I must beg very serious persons not to read this. It is not written for them. It is not written for grave people who despise trifles and who always require to be instructed. I only venture to offer this to those who like to be entertained, and whose minds are both young and gay. Only those who are amused by innocent pleasures will read this to the end. Of these I beg, should they have little children, that they will tell them about my Honey-Bee. I wish this story to please both boys and girls and yet I hardly dare to hope it will. It is too frivolous for them and, really, only suitable for old-fashioned children. I have a pretty little neighbour of nine whose library I examined the other day. I found many books on the microscope and the zoophytes, as well as several scientific story-books. One of these I opened at the following lines: "The cuttle-fish

Sepia Officinalis is a cephalopodic mollusc whose body includes a spongy organ containing a chylaqueous fluid saturated with carbonate of lime."

My pretty little neighbour finds this story very interesting. I beg of her, unless she wishes me to die of mortification, never to read the story of Honey-Bee.

II

In which we learn what the white rose meant to the Countess of Blanchelande

AVING placed on her golden hair a little black hood embroidered with pearls and bound about her waist a widow's girdle, the Countess of Blanchelande entered the chapel where it was her daily custom to pray for the soul of her husband who had been killed in single-handed combat with a giant from Ireland.

That day she saw a white rose lying on the cushion of her *prie-Dieu;* at sight of this she turned pale; her eyes grew dim; she bowed her head and wrung her hands. For she knew that when a Countess of Blanchelande is about to die she always finds a white rise on her *prie-Dieu.*

Warned by this that her time had come to leave a world in which in so short a time she had been wife, mother and widow, she entered the chamber where her son George slept in the care of the nurses. He was three years old. His long eyelashes threw a lovely shadow on his cheeks, and his

mouth looked like a flower. At sight of him, so helpless and so beautiful, she began to weep.

"My little child," she cried in anguish, "my dear little child, you will never have known me and my image will fade for ever from your dear eyes. And yet, to be truly your mother, I nourished you with my own milk, and for love of you I refused the hand of the noblest cavaliers."

So speaking she kissed a medallion in which was her own portrait and a lock of her hair, and this she hung about the neck of her son. A mother's tear fell on the little one's cheek as he stirred in his cradle and rubbed his eyes with his little hands. But the Countess turned her head away and fled out of the room. How could eyes about to be extinguished for ever bear the light of two dear eyes in which the soul was only beginning to dawn?

She ordered a steed to be saddled and followed by her squire, Francœur, she rode to the castle of Clarides.

The Duchess of Clarides embraced the Countess of Blanchelande.

"Loveliest! what good fortune brings you here?"

"The fortune that brings me here is not good. Listen, my friend. We were married within a few years of each other, and similar fates have made us widows. For in these times of chivalry the best

perish first, and in order to live long one must be a monk. When you became a mother I had already been one for two years. Your daughter Honey-Bee is lovely as the day, and my little George is good. I love you and you love me. Know then that I have found a white rose on the cushion of my *prie-Dieu*. I am about to die; I leave you my son."

The Duchess knew what the white rose meant to the ladies of Blanchelande. She began to weep and in the midst of her tears she promised to bring up Honey-Bee and George as brother and sister, and to give nothing to one which the other did not share.

Still in each other's arms the two women approached the cradle where little Honey-Bee slept under light curtains, blue as the sky, and without opening her eyes, she moved her little arms. And as she spread her fingers five little rosy rays came out of each sleeve.

"He will defend her," said the mother of George.

"And she will love him," the mother of Honey-Bee replied.

"She will love him," a clear little voice repeated, which the Duchess recognised as that of a spirit which for a long time had lived under the hearth-stone.

On her return to her manor the lady of Blanche-

lande divided her jewels among her women and, having had herself anointed with perfume ointments and robed in her richest raiment in order to honour the body destined to rise again at the day of judgment, she lay down on her bed and fell asleep never again to awaken.

III

Wherein begins the love of George of Blanchelande and Honey-Bee of Clarides

ONTRARY to the common destiny which is to have more goodness than beauty, or more beauty than goodness, the Duchess of Clarides was as good as she was beautiful, and she was so beautiful that many princes, though they had only seen her portrait, demanded her hand in marriage. But to all their pleading she replied:

"I shall have but one husband as I have but one soul."

However, after five years of mourning she left off her long veil and her black robes, so as not to spoil the happiness of those about her, and in order that all should smile and be free to enjoy themselves in her presence. Her duchy comprised a great extent of country; moorlands, overgrown by heather, covered the desolate expanse, lakes in which fishermen sometimes caught magic fish, and mountains which rose in fearful solitudes over subterraneous regions inhabited by dwarfs.

She governed Clarides with the help of an old

monk who, having escaped from Constantinople and seen much violence and treachery, had but little faith in human goodness. He lived in a tower in the company of birds and books, and from this place he filled his position as counsellor by the aid of a number of little maxims. His rules were these: "Never revive a law once fallen into disuse; always accede to the demands of a people for fear of revolt, but accede as slowly as possible, because no sooner is one reform granted than the public demands another, and you can be turned out for acceding too quickly as well as for resisting too long."

The Duchess let him have his own way, for she understood nothing about politics. She was compassionate and, as she was unable to respect all men, she pitied those who were unfortunate enough to be wicked. She helped the suffering in every possible way, visited the sick, comforted the widows, and took the poor orphans under her protection.

She educated her daughter Honey-Bee with a charming wisdom. Having brought the child up only to do good, she never denied her any pleasure.

This good woman kept the promise she had made to the poor Countess of Blanchelande. She was like a mother to George, and she made no difference between him and Honey-Bee. They grew up together, and George approved of Honey-Bee, though

he thought her rather small. Once, when they were very little, he went up to her and asked:

"Will you play with me?"

"I should like to," said Honey-Bee.

"We will make mud pies," said George, which they proceeded to do. But as Honey-Bee made hers very badly, George struck her fingers with his spade. Whereupon Honey-Bee set up a most awful roar and the squire, Francœur, who was strolling about in the garden, said to his young master:

"It is not worthy of a Count of Blanchelande to strike young ladies, your lordship."

Whereupon George was seized with an ardent desire to hit Francœur also with his spade. But as this presented insurmountable difficulties, he resigned himself to do what was easier, and that was to stand with his nose against the trunk of a big tree and weep torrents.

In the meantime Honey-Bee took care to encourage her own tears by digging her fists into her eyes; and in her despair she rubbed her nose against the trunk of a neighbouring tree. When night came and softly covered the earth, Honey-Bee and George were still weeping, each in front of a tree. The Duchess of Clarides was obliged to come and take her daughter by one hand and George by the other, and lead them back to the castle. Their

eyes were red and their noses were red and their cheeks shone. They sighed and sobbed enough to break one's heart. But they ate a good supper, after which they were both put to bed. But as soon as the candle was blown out they re-appeared like two little ghosts in two little night-gowns, and they hugged each other and laughed at the top of their voices.

And thus began the love of Honey-Bee of Clarides and George of Blanchelande.

IV

Which treats of Education in general, and George of Blanchelande's in particular

SO George grew up in the Castle side by side with Honey-Bee, whom he affectionately called his sister though he knew she was not.

He had masters in fencing, riding, swimming, gymnastics, dancing, hunting, falconry, tennis, and, indeed, in all the arts. He even had a writing-master. This was an old cleric, humble of manner but very proud within, who taught him all manner of penmanship, and the more beautiful this was the less decipherable it became. Very little pleasure or profit did George get out of the old cleric's lessons, as little as out of those of an old monk who taught him grammar in barbarous terms. George could not understand the sense of learning a language which one knows as a matter of course and which is called one's mother tongue.

He only enjoyed himself with Francœur the squire, who, having knocked about the world, understood the ways of men and beasts, could describe all sorts of countries and compose songs which he

could not write. Francœur was the only one of his masters who taught George anything, for he was the only one who really loved him, and the only good lessons are those which are given with love. The two old goggle-eyes, the writing-master and the grammar-master, who hated each other with all their hearts, were, however, united in a common hatred of the old squire, whom they accused of being a drunkard.

It is true that Francœur frequented the tavern "The Pewter Pot" somewhat too zealously. It was here that he forgot his sorrows and composed his songs. But of course it was very wrong of him.

Homer made better verses than Francœur, and Homer only drank the water of the springs. As for sorrows the whole world has sorrows, and the thing to make one forget them is not the wine one drinks, but the good one does. But Francœur was an old man grown grey in harness, faithful and trustworthy, and the two masters of writing and grammar should have hidden his failings from the duchess instead of giving her an exaggerated account of them.

"Francœur is a drunkard," said the writing-master, "and when he comes back from the 'Pewter Pot' he makes a letter S as he walks. Moreover, it is the

only letter he has ever made; because if it please your Grace, this drunkard is an ass."

The grammar-master added, "And the songs Francœur sings as he staggers about err against all rules and are constructed on no model at all. He ignores all the rules of rhetoric, please your Grace."

The Duchess had a natural distaste for pedants and tale-bearers. She did what we all would have done in her place; at first she did not listen to them but as they again began to repeat their tittle-tattle, she ended by believing them and decided to send Francœur away. However, to give him an honourable exile, she sent him to Rome to obtain the blessing of the Pope. This journey was all the longer for Francœur the squire because a great many taverns much frequented by musicians separated the duchy of Clarides from the holy apostolic seat. In the course of this story we shall see how soon the Duchess regretted having deprived the two children of their most faithful guardian.

V

Which tells how the Duchess took Honey-Bee and George to the Hermitage, and of their encounter with a hideous old woman

HAT morning, it was the first Sunday after Easter, the Duchess rode out of the castle on the great sorrel horse, while on her left George of Blanchelande was mounted on a dark horse with a white star on his black forehead, and on her right Honey-Bee guided her milk-white steed with rose-coloured reins. They were on their way to the Hermitage to hear mass. Soldiers armed with lances formed their escort and, as they passed, the people crowded forward to admire them, and, indeed, all three were very fair to see. Under a veil of silver flowers and with flowing mantle the Duchess had an air of lovely majesty; while the pearls with which her coif was embroidered shone with a soft radiance that well-suited the face and soul of this beautiful lady. George by her side with flowing hair and sparkling eyes was very good to see. And on the other side rode Honey-Bee, the tender and pure colour of her face like a caress for the eyes;

but most glorious of all her fair tresses, flowing over her shoulders, held by a circlet of gold surmounted by three gold flowers, seemed the shining mantle of her youth and beauty. The good people said, on seeing her:

"What a lovely young damsel."

The master tailor, old Jean, took his grandson Peter in his arms to point out Honey-Bee to him, and Peter asked was she alive or was she an image of wax, for he could not understand how any one could be so white and so lovely, and yet belong to the same race as himself, little Peter with his good big weather-beaten cheeks, and his little home-spun shirt laced behind in country fashion.

While the Duchess accepted the people's homage with gracious kindness, the two children showed how it gratified their pride, George by his blushes, Honey-Bee by her smiles, and for this reason the Duchess said to them:

"How kindly these good people greet us. For what reason, George? And what is the reason, Honey-Bee?"

"So they should," said Honey-Bee.

"It's their duty," George added.

"But why should it be their duty?" asked the Duchess.

And as neither replied, she continued:

"I will tell you. For more than three hundred years the dukes of Clarides, from father to son, have lance in hand protected these poor people so that they could gather the harvest of the fields they had sown. For more than three hundred years all the duchesses of Clarides have spun the cloth for the poor, have visited the sick, and have held the newborn at the baptismal font. That is the reason they greet you, my children."

George was lost in deep thought: "We must protect those who toil on the land," and Honey-Bee said: "One should spin for the poor."

And thus chattering and meditating they went on their way through meadows starred with flowers. A fringe of blue mountains lay against the distant horizon. George pointed towards the east.

"Is that a great steel shield I see over there?"

"Oh no," said Honey-Bee, "it's a round silver clasp, as big as the moon."

"It is neither a steel shield nor a silver clasp, my children," replied the Duchess, "but a lake glittering in the sunshine. The surface of this lake, which seen from here is as smooth as a mirror, is stirred by innumerable ripples. Its borders which appear as distinct as if cut in metal are really covered by reeds with feathery plumes and irises whose flower is like a human glance between the blades of swords.

Every morning a white mist rises over the lake which shines like armour under the midday sun. But none must approach it for in it dwell the nixies who lure passers by into their crystal abodes."

At this moment the bell of the Hermitage was heard.

"Let us dismount," said the Duchess, "and walk to the chapel. It was neither on elephants nor camels that the wise men of the East approached the manger."

They heard the hermit's mass. A hideous old crone covered with rags knelt beside the Duchess, who on leaving the church offered her holy water.

"Accept it, good mother," she said.

George was amazed.

"Do you not know," said the Duchess, "that in the poor you honour the chosen of our Lord Jesus Christ? A beggar such as this as well as the good Duke of Rochesnoires held you at the font when you were baptized; and your little sister, Honey-Bee, also had one of these poor creatures as god-mother."

The old crone who seemed to have guessed the boy's thoughts leaned towards him.

"Fair prince," she cried mockingly, "may you conquer as many kingdoms as I have lost. I was the queen of the Island of Pearls and the Moun-

tains of Gold; each day my table was served with fourteen different kinds of fish, and a negro page bore my train."

"And by what misfortune have you lost your islands and your mountains, good woman?" asked the Duchess.

"I vexed the dwarfs, and they carried me far away from my dominions."

"Are the dwarfs so powerful?" George asked.

"As they live in the earth," the old woman answered, "they know the virtue of precious stones, they work in metals, and they unseal the hidden sources of the springs."

"And what did you do to vex them?" asked the Duchess.

"On a December night," said the old woman "one of them came to ask permission to prepare a great midnight banquet in the kitchen of my castle, which, vaster than a chapter-house, was furnished with casseroles, frying-pans, earthen saucepans, kettles, pans, portable-ovens, gridirons, boilers, dripping-pans, dutch-ovens, fish-kettles, copper-pans, pastry-moulds, copper-jugs, goblets of gold and silver, and mottled wood, not to mention iron roasting-jacks, artistically forged, and the huge black cauldron which hung from the pot-hook. He promised neither to disturb nor to damage anything.

I refused his request, and he disappeared muttering vague threats. The third night, it being Christmas, this same dwarf returned to the chamber where I slept. He was accompanied by innumerable others, who pulled me out of bed and carried me to an unknown land in my nightgown. "Such," they said as they left me, "such is the punishment of the rich who refuse even a part of their treasure to the industrious and kindly dwarf folk who work in gold and cause the springs to flow."

Thus said the toothless old woman, and the Duchess having comforted her with words and money, she and the two children retraced their way to the castle.

VI

Which tells of what can be seen from the Keep of Clarides

IT was one day shortly after this that Honey-Bee and George, without being observed, climbed the steps of the watch-tower which stands in the middle of the Castle of Clarides. Having reached the platform they shouted at the top of their voices and clapped their hands.

Their view extended down the hillside divided into brown and green squares of cultivated fields. Woods and mountains lay dimly blue against the distant horizon.

"Little sister," cried George, "little sister, look at the whole wide world!"

"The world is very big," said Honey-Bee.

"My teachers," said George, "have taught me that it is very big; but, as Gertrude our housekeeper says, one must see to believe."

They went the round of the platform.

"Here is something wonderful, little brother," cried Honey-Bee. "The castle stands in the middle of the earth and we are on the watch-tower in the

middle of the castle, and so we are standing in the middle of the earth. Ha! ha! ha!"

And, indeed, the horizon formed a circle about the children of which the watch-tower was the centre.

"We are in the very middle of the earth! Ha! ha! ha!" George repeated.

Whereupon they both started a-thinking.

"What a pity that the world is so big!" said Honey-Bee, "one might get lost and be separated from one's friends."

George shrugged his shoulders.

"How lucky that the world is so big! One can go in search of adventures. When I am grown up I mean to conquer the mountains that stand at the ends of the earth. That is where the moon rises; I shall seize her as she passes, and I will give her to you, Honey-Bee."

"Yes," said Honey-Bee, "give her to me and I will put her in my hair."

Then they busied themselves searching for the places they knew as on a map.

"I recognise everything," said Honey-Bee, who recognised nothing, "but what are those little square stones scattered over the hillside?"

"Houses," George replied. "Those are houses. Don't you recognise the capital of the Duchy of

Clarides, little sister? After all, it is a great city; it has three streets, and one can drive through one of them. Don't you remember that we passed through it last week when we went to the Hermitage?"

"And what is that winding brook?"

"That is the river. See the old stone bridge down there?"

"The bridge under which we fished for cray-fish?"

"That's the one; and in one of the niches stands the statue of the 'Woman without a Head.' One cannot see her from here because she is too small."

"I remember. But why hasn't she got a head?"

"Probably because she has lost it."

Without saying if this explanation was satisfactory, Honey-Bee gazed at the horizon.

"Little brother, little brother, just see what sparkles by the side of the blue mountains? It is the lake."

"It is the lake."

They then remembered what the duchess had told them of these beautiful and dangerous waters where the nixies dwell.

"We will go there," said Honey-Bee.

George was aghast. He stared at her with his mouth wide open.

"But the Duchess has forbidden us to go out

alone, so how can we go to this lake which is at the end of the earth?"

"How can we go? I don't know. It's you who ought to know, for you are a man and you have a grammar-master."

This piqued George who replied that one might be a man, and even a very brave man, and yet not know all the roads on earth. Whereupon Honey-Bee said drily with a little air of scorn which made him blush to his ears:

"*I* never said *I* would conquer the blue mountains or take down the moon. I don't know the way to the lake, but I mean to find it!"

George pretended to laugh.

"You laugh like a cucumber."

"Cucumbers neither laugh nor cry."

"If they did laugh they would laugh like you. I shall go along to the lake. And while I search for the beautiful waters in which the nixies live you shall stay alone at home like a good girl. I will leave you my needle-work and my doll. Take care of them George, take good care of them."

George was proud, and he was conscious of the humiliation with which Honey-Bee covered him.

Gloomily and with head bowed he cried in a hollow voice:

"Very well, then, we will go to the lake."

VII

In which is described how George and Honey-Bee went to the lake

HE next day after the midday meal, the Duchess having gone to her own room George took Honey-Bee by the hand.

"Now come!" he said.

"Where?"

"Hush!"

They crept down stairs and crossed the courtyard. After they had passed the postern, Honey-Bee again asked where they were going.

"To the lake," George said resolutely.

Honey-Bee opened her mouth wide but remained speechless. To go so far without permission and in satin shoes! For her shoes were of satin. There was no sense in it.

"We must go and there is no need to be sensible."

Such was George's proud reply. She had once humiliated him and now she pretended to be astonished.

This time it was he who disdainfully sent her back to her dolls. Girls always tempt one on to

adventures and then run away. So mean! She could remain. He'd go alone.

She clung to his arm; he pushed her away.

She hung about his neck.

"Little brother," she sobbed, "I will follow you."

He allowed himself to be moved by such touching repentance.

"Come then, but not through the town; we may be seen. We will follow the ramparts and then we can reach the highway by a cross road."

And so they went hand in hand while George explained his plans.

"We will follow the road we took to the Hermitage and then we shall be sure to see the lake, just as we did the other day, and then we can cross the fields in a bee line."

"A bee line" is the pretty rustic way of saying a straight line; and they both laughed because of the young girl's name which fitted in so oddly.

Honey-Bee picked flowers along the ditches; she made a posy of marshmallows, white mullein, asters and chrysanthemums; the flowers faded in her little hands and it was pitiful to see them when Honey-Bee crossed the old stone bridge. As she did not know what to do with them she decided to throw them into the water to refresh them, but finally she

preferred to give them to the "Woman without a head."

She begged George to lift her in his arms so as to make her tall enough, and she placed her armful of wild flowers between the folded hands of the old stone figure.

After she was far away she looked back and saw a pigeon resting on the shoulder of the statue.

When they had been walking some time, said Honey-Bee, "I am thirsty."

"So am I," George replied, "but the river is far behind us, and I see neither brook nor fountain."

"The sun is so hot that he has drunk them all up. What shall we do?"

So they talked and lamented when they saw a peasant woman approach who carried a basket of fruit.

"Cherries!" cried George. "How unlucky: I have no money to buy any."

"I have money," said Honey-Bee.

She pulled out of her pocket a little purse in which were five pieces of gold.

"Good woman," she said to the peasant, "will you give me as many cherries as my frock will hold?"

And she raised her little skirt with her two hands. The woman threw in two or three handfuls of cherries. With one hand Honey Bee held the up-

lifted skirt and with the other she offered the woman a gold piece.

"Is that enough?"

The woman clutched the gold piece which would amply have paid not only for the cherries in the basket but for the tree on which they grew and the plot of land on which the tree stood.

The artful one replied:

"I'm satisfied, if only to oblige you, little princess."

"Well then, put some more cherries in my brother's cap," said Honey Bee, "and you shall have another gold piece."

This was done. The peasant woman went on her way meditating in what old stocking or under what mattress she should hide her two gold pieces.

And the two children followed the road eating the cherries and throwing the stones to the right and the left. George chose the cherries that hung two by two on one stem and made earrings for his little sister, and he laughed to see the lovely twin fruit dangle its vermilion beauty against her cheeks.

A pebble stopped their joyous progress. It had got into Honey-Bee's little shoe and she began to limp. At every step she took, her golden curls bobbed against her cheek, and so limping she sat down on a bank by the roadside. Her brother

knelt down and took off her satin shoe. He shook it and out dropped a little white pebble.

"Little brother," she said as she looked at her feet, "the next time we go to the lake we'll put on boots."

The sun was already sinking against the radiant sky; a soft breeze caressed their cheeks and necks, and so, cheered and refreshed, the two little travellers proceeded on their way. To make walking easier they went hand in hand, and they laughed to see their moving shadows melt together before them. They sang:

Maid Marian, setting forth to find
The mill, with sacks of corn to grind,
Her donkey, Jan, bestrode.
My dainty maiden, Marian,
She mounted on her donkey, Jan,
And took the mill-ward road.*

But Honey-Bee stopped:

"I have lost my shoe, my satin shoe," she cried. And so it was. The little shoe, whose silken laces had become loose in walking, lay in the road covered

* Marian' s'en allant au moulin,
Pour y faire moudre son grain,
Ell' monta sur son âne,
Ma p'tite mam'sell' Marianne!
Ell' monta sur son âne Martin
Pour aller au moulin.

with dust. Then as she looked back and saw the towers of the castle of Clarides fade into the distant twilight her heart sank and the tears came to her eyes.

"The wolves will eat us," she cried, "and our mother will never see us again and she will die of grief."

But George comforted her as he put on her shoe.

"When the castle bell rings for supper we shall have returned to Clarides. Come!"

The miller saw her coming nigh
And could not well forbear to cry,
Your donkey you must tether.
My dainty maiden, Marian,
Tether you here your donkey, Jan,
Who brought us twain together.

"The lake, Honey-Bee! See the lake, the lake, the lake!"

"Yes, George, the lake!"

George shouted "hurrah" and flung his hat in the air. Honey-Bee was too proper to fling hers

*Le meunier qui la voit venir
Ne peut s'empêcher de lui dire:
Attachez là votre âne,
Ma p'tite Mam'sell' Marianne,
Attachez là votre âne Martin
Qui vous mène au moulin.

up also, so taking off the shoe that wouldn't stay on she threw it joyfully over her head.

There lay the lake in the depths of the valley and its curved and sloping banks made a framework of foliage and flowers about its silver waves. It lay there clear and tranquil, and one could see the swaying of the indistinct green of its banks.

But the children could find no path through the underbrush that would lead to its beautiful waters.

While they were searching for one their legs were nipped by some geese driven by a little girl dressed in a sheepskin and carrying a switch. George asked her name.

"Gilberte."

"Well, then, Gilberte, how can one go to the lake?"

"Folks doesn't go."

"Why?"

"Because . . ."

"But supposing folks did?"

"If folks did there'd be a path, and one would take that path."

George could think of no adequate reply to this guardian of the geese.

"Let's go," he said, "farther on we shall be sure to find a way through the woods."

"And we will pick nuts and eat them," said Honey-Bee, "for I am hungry. The next time we go to the lake we must bring a satchel full of good things to eat."

"That we will, little sister," said George. "And I quite agree with Francœur, our squire, who when he went to Rome, took a ham with him, in case he should hunger, and a flask lest he should be thirsty. But hurry, for it is growing late, though I don't know the time."

"The shepherdesses know by looking at the sun," said Honey-Bee; "but I am not a shepherdess. Yet it seems to me that when we left the sun was over our head, and now it is down there, far behind the town and castle of Clarides. I wonder if this happens every day and what it means?"

While they looked at the sun a cloud of dust rose up from the high road, and they saw some cavaliers with glittering weapons ride past at full speed. The children hid in the underbrush in great terror. "They are thieves or probably ogres," they thought. They were really guards sent by the Duchess of Clarides in search of the little truants.

The two little adventurers found a footpath in the underbrush, not a lovers' lane, for it was impossible to walk side by side holding hands as is the fashion of lovers. Nor could the print of human

footsteps be seen, but only indentations left by innumerable tiny cloven feet.

"Those are the feet of little devils," said Honey-Bee.

"Or deer," suggested George.

The matter was never explained. But what is certain is that the footpath descended in a gentle slope towards the edge of the lake which lay before the two children in all its languorous and silent beauty. The willows surrounded its banks with their tender foliage. The slender blades of the reeds with their delicate plumes swayed lightly over the water. They formed tremulous islands about which the water-lilies spread their great heart-shaped leaves and snow-white flowers. Over these blossoming islands dragon-flies, all emerald or azure, with wings of flame, sped their shrill flight in suddenly altered curves.

The children plunged their burning feet with joy in the damp sand overgrown with tufted horse-tails and the reed-mace with its slender lance. The sweet flag wafted towards them its humble fragrance and the water plantain unrolled about them its filaments of lace on the margin of the sleeping waters which the willow-herb starred with its purple flowers.

VIII

Wherein we shall see what happened to George of Blanchelande because he approached the lake in which the nixies dwell.

HONEY-BEE crossed the sand between two clumps of willows, and the little spirit of the place leaped into the water in front of her leaving circles that grew greater and greater and finally vanished. This spirit was a little green frog with a white belly. All was silent; a fresh breeze swept over the clear lake whose every ripple had the gracious curve of a smile.

"This lake is pretty," said Honey-Bee, "but my feet are bleeding in my little torn shoes, and I am very hungry. I wish I were back in the castle."

"Little sister," said George, "sit down on the grass. I will wrap your feet in leaves to cool them; then I will go in search of supper for you. High up along the road I saw some ripe blackberries. I will fetch you the sweetest and best in my hat. Give me your handkerchief; I will fill it with strawberries, for there are strawberries near here along

the footpath under the shade of the trees. And I will fill my pockets with nuts."

He made a bed of moss for Honey-Bee under a willow on the edge of the lake, and then he left her.

Honey-Bee lay with folded hands on her little mossy bed and watched the light of the first stars tremble in the pale sky; then her eyes half closed, and yet it seemed to her as if overheard she saw a little dwarf mounted on a raven. It was not fancy. For having reined in the black bird who was gnawing at the bridle, the dwarf stopped just above the young girl and stared down at her with his round eyes. Whereupon he disappeared at full gallop. All this Honey-Bee saw vaguely and then she fell asleep.

She was still asleep when George returned with the fruit he had gathered, which he placed at her side. Then he climbed down to the lake while he waited for her to awaken. The lake slept under its delicate crown of verdure. A light mist swept softly over the waters. Suddenly the moon appeared between the branches, and then the waves were strewn as if with countless stars.

But George could see that the lights which irradiated the waters were not all the broken reflections of the moon, for blue flames advanced in circles, swaying and undulating as if in a dance.

Soon he saw that the blue flames flickered over the white faces of women, beautiful faces rising on the crests of the waves and crowned with sea-weeds and sea-shells, with sea-green tresses floating over their shoulders and veils flowing from under their breasts that shimmered with pearls. The child recognised the nixies and tried to flee. But already their cold white arms had seized him, and in spite of his struggles and cries he was borne across the waters along the galleries of porphyry and crystal.

IX

Wherein we shall see how Honey-Bee was taken to the dwarfs

HE moon had risen over the lake and the water now only showed broken reflections of its disc. Honey-Bee still slept. The dwarf who had watched her came back again on his raven followed this time by a crowd of little men. They were very little men. Their white beards hung down to their knees. They looked like old men with the figures of children. By their leathern aprons and the hammers which hung from their belts one could see that they were workers in metals. They had a curious gait, for they leaped to amazing heights and turned the most extraordinary somersaults, and showed the most inconceivable agility that made them seem more like spirits than human beings.

Yet while cutting their most foolhardy capers they preserved an unalterable gravity of demeanour, to such a degree that it was quite impossible to make out their real characters.

They placed themselves in a circle about the sleeping child.

"Now then," said the smallest of the dwarfs from the heights of his plumed charger; "now then, did I deceive you when I said that the loveliest of princesses was lying asleep on the borders of the lake, and do you not thank me for bringing you here?"

"We thank you Bob," replied one of the dwarfs who looked like an elderly poet, "indeed there is nothing lovelier in the world than this young damsel. She is more rosy than the dawn which rises on the mountains, and the gold we forge is not so bright as the gold of her tresses."

"Very good, Pic, nothing can be truer," cried the dwarfs, "but what shall we do with this lovely little lady?"

Pic, who looked like a very elderly poet, did not reply to this question, probably because he knew no better than they what to do with this pretty lady.

"Let us build a large cage and put her in," a dwarf by the name of Rug suggested.

Against this another dwarf called Dig vehemently protested. It was Dig's opinion that only wild beasts were ever put into cages, and there was nothing yet to prove that the pretty lady was one of these.

But Rug clung to his idea for the reason possibly that he had no other. He defended it with much subtlety. Said he:

"If this person is not savage she will certainly become so as a result of the cage, which will be therefore not only useful but indispensable."

This reasoning displeased the dwarfs, and one of them named Tad denounced it with much indignation. He was such a good dwarf. He proposed to take the beautiful child back to her kindred who must be great nobles.

But this advice was rejected as being contrary to the custom of the dwarfs.

"We ought to follow the ways of justice not custom," said Tad.

But no one paid any further attention to him and the assembly broke into a tumult as a dwarf named Pau, a simple soul but just, gave his advice in these terms:

"We must begin by awakening this young lady, seeing she declines to wake of herself; if she spends the night here her eyelids will be swollen to-morrow and her beauty will be much impaired, for it is very unhealthy to sleep in a wood on the borders of a lake."

This opinion met with general approval as it did not clash with any other.

Pic, who looked like an elderly poet burdened with care, approached the young girl and looked at her very intently, under the impression that a single one of his glances would be quite sufficient to rouse the dreamer out of the deepest sleep. But Pic was quite mistaken as to the power of his glance, for Honey-Bee continued to sleep with folded hands.

Seeing this the good Tad pulled her gently by her sleeve. Thereupon she partly opened her eyes and raised herself on her elbow. When she found herself lying on a bed of moss surrounded by dwarfs she thought what she saw was nothing but a dream, and she rubbed her eyes to open them, so that instead of this fantastic vision she should see the pure light of morning as it entered her little blue room in which she thought she was. For her mind, heavy with sleep, did not recall to her the adventure of the lake. But indeed, it was useless to rub her eyes, the dwarfs did not vanish, and so she was obliged to believe that they were real. Then she looked about with frightened eyes and saw the forest and remembered.

"George! my brother George!" she cried in anguish. The dwarfs crowded about her, and for fear of seeing them she hid her face in her hands.

"George! George! Where is my brother George?" she sobbed.

The dwarfs could not tell her, for the good reason that they did not know. And she wept hot tears and cried aloud for her mother and brother.

Pau longed to weep with her, and in his efforts to console, he addressed her with rather vague remarks.

"Do not distress yourself so much," he urged, "it would be a pity for so lovely a young damsel to spoil her eyes with weeping. Rather tell us your story, which cannot fail to be very amusing. We should be so pleased."

She did not listen. She rose and tried to escape. But her bare and swollen feet caused her such pain that she fell on her knees, sobbing most pitifully. Tad held her in his arms, and Pau tenderly kissed her hand. It was this that gave her the courage to look at them, and she saw that they seemed full of compassion.

Pic looked to her like one inspired, and yet very innocent, and perceiving that all these little men were full of compassion for her, she said:

"Little men, it is a pity you are so ugly; but I will love you all the same if you will only give me something to eat, for I am so hungry."

"Bob," all the dwarfs cried at once, "go and fetch some supper."

And Bob flew off on his raven. All the same, the dwarfs resented this small girl's injustice in find-

ing them ugly. Rug was very angry. Pic said to himself, "She is only a child, and she does not see the light of genius which shines in my eyes, and which gives them the power which crushes as well as the grace which charms."

As for Pau, he thought to himself: "Perhaps it would have been better if I had not awakened this young lady who finds us ugly." But Tad said smiling:

"You will find us less ugly, dear young lady, when you love us more."

As he spoke Bob re-appeared on his raven. He held a dish of gold on which were a roast pheasant, an oatmeal cake, and a bottle of claret. He cut innumerable capers as he laid this supper at the feet of Honey-Bee.

"Little men," Honey-Bee said as she ate, "your supper is very good. My name is Honey-Bee; let us go in search of my brother, and then we will all go together to Clarides where mama is waiting for us in great anxiety."

But Dig, who was a kind dwarf, represented to Honey-Bee that she was not able to walk; that her brother was big enough to find his own way; that no misfortune could come to him in a country in which all the wild beasts had been destroyed.

"We will make a litter," he added, "and cover

it with leaves and moss, and we will put you on it, and in this way we will carry you to the mountain and present you to the King of the Dwarfs, according to the custom of our people."

All the dwarfs applauded. Honey-Bee looked at her aching feet and remained silent. She was glad to learn that there were no wild beasts in the country. And on the whole she was willing to trust herself to the kindness of the dwarfs.

They were already busy constructing the litter. Those with hatchets were felling two young fir trees with resounding blows. This brought back to Rug his original suggestion.

"If instead of a litter we made a cage," he urged.

But he aroused a unanimous protest. Tad looked at him scornfully.

"You are more like a human being than a dwarf, Rug," he said. "But at least it is to the honour of our race that the most wicked dwarf is also the most stupid."

In the meantime the task had been accomplished. The dwarfs leaped into the air and in a bound seized and cut the branches, out of which they deftly wove a basket chair. Having covered it with moss and leaves, they placed Honey-Bee upon it, then they seized the two poles, placed them on their shoulders and, then! off they went to the mountain.

X

In which we are faithfully told how King Loc received Honey-Bee of Clarides

HEY climbed a winding path along the wooded slope of the hill. Here and there granite boulders, bare and blasted, broke through the grey verdure of the dwarf oaks, and the sombre purple mountain with its bluish ravines formed an impassable barrier about the desolate landscape.

The procession, preceded by Bob on his feathered steed, passed through a chasm overgrown with brambles. Honey-Bee, with her golden hair flowing over her shoulders, looked like the dawn breaking on the mountains, supposing, of course, that the dawn was ever frightened and called her mother and tried to escape, for all these things she did as she caught a confused glimpse of dwarfs, armed to the teeth, lying in ambush along the windings of the rocks.

With bows bent or lance at rest they stood immovable. Their tunics of wild beast skins and their

long knives that hung from their belts gave them a most terrible appearance. Game, furred and feathered, lay beside them. And yet these huntsmen, to judge only by their faces, did not seem very grim; on the contrary, they appeared gentle and grave like the dwarfs of the forest, whom they greatly resembled.

In their midst stood a dwarf full of majesty. He wore a cock feather over his ear, and on his head a diadem set with enormous gems. His mantle raised at the shoulder disclosed a muscular arm covered with circlets of gold. A horn of ivory and chased silver hung from his belt. His left hand rested on his lance in an attitude of quiet strength, and his right he held over his eyes so as to look towards Honey-Bee and the light.

"King Loc," said the forest dwarfs, "we have brought you the beautiful child we have found; her name is Honey-Bee."

"You have done well," said King Loc. "She shall live amongst us according to the custom of the dwarfs."

"Honey-Bee," he said, approaching her, "you are welcome." He spoke very gently, for he already felt very kindly towards her. He lifted himself on the tips of his toes to kiss her hand that hung at her side, and he assured her not only that he would

do her no harm, but that he would try to gratify all her wishes, even should she long for necklaces, mirrors, stuffs from Cashmere and silks from China.

"I wish I had some shoes," replied Honey-Bee. Upon which King Loc struck his lance against a bronze disc that hung on the surface of the rock, and instantly something bounded like a ball out of the depths of the cavern. Increasing in size it disclosed the face of a dwarf with features such as painters give to the illustrious Belisarius, but his leather apron proclaimed that he was a shoemaker. He was indeed the chief of the shoemakers.

"Truc," said the king, "choose the softest leather out of our store-houses, take cloth-of-gold and silver, ask the guardian of my treasures for a thousand pearls of the finest water, and with this leather, these fabrics, and these pearls create a pair of shoes for the lady Honey-Bee."

At these words Truc threw himself at the feet of Honey-Bee and measured them with great care.

"Little King Loc," said Honey-Bee, "I want the pretty shoes you promised at once, because as soon as I have them I must return to Clarides to my mother."

"You shall have the shoes," King Loc replied; "you shall have them to walk about the mountain,

but not to return to Clarides, for never again shall you leave this kingdom, where we will teach you wonderful secrets still unknown on earth. The dwarfs are superior to men, and it is your good fortune that you are made welcome amongst them."

"It is my misfortune," replied Honey-Bee. "Little King Loc, give me a pair of wooden shoes, such as the peasants wear, and let me return to Clarides."

But King Loc made a sign with his head to signify that this was impossible. Then Honey-Bee clasped her hands and said, coaxingly:

"Little King Loc, let me go and I will love you very much."

"You will forget me in your shining world."

"Little King Loc, I will never forget you, and I will love you as much as I love Flying Wind."

"And who is Flying Wind?"

"It is my milk-white steed, and he has rose-coloured reins and he eats out of my hand. When he was very little Francœur the squire used to bring him to my room every morning and I kissed him. But now Francœur is in Rome, and Flying Wind is too big to mount the stairs."

King Loc smiled.

"Will you love me more than Flying Wind?"

"Indeed I would," said Honey-Bee.

"Well said," cried the King.

"Indeed I would, but I cannot, I hate you, little King Loc, because you will not let me see my mother and George again."

"Who is George?"

"George is George and I love him."

The friendship of King Loc for Honey-Bee had increased prodigiously in a few minutes, and as he had already made up his mind to marry her as soon as she was of age, and hoped through her to reconcile men and dwarfs, he feared that later on George might become his rival and wreck his plans. It was because of this that he turned away frowning, his head bowed as if with care.

Honey-Bee seeing that she had offended him pulled him gently by his mantle.

"Little King Loc," she said, in a voice both tender and sad, "why should we make each other unhappy, you and I?"

"It is in the nature of things," replied King Loc. "I cannot take you back to your mother, but I will send her a dream which will tell her your fate, dear Honey-Bee, and that will comfort her."

"Little King Loc," and Honey-Bee smiled through her tears, "what a good idea, but I will tell you just what you ought to do. You must send

my mother a dream every night in which she will see me, and every night you must send me a dream in which I shall see her."

And King Loc promised, and so said, so done. Every night Honey-Bee saw her mother, and every night the Duchess saw her daughter, and that satisfied their love just a little.

XI

In which the marvels of the kingdom of the dwarfs are accurately described, as well as the dolls that were given to Honey-Bee

HE kingdom of the dwarfs was very deep and extended under the greater part of the earth. Though one only caught a glimpse of the sky here and there through the clefts in the rocks, the roads, the avenues, the palaces and the galleries of this subterraneous region were not plunged in absolute darkness. Only a few spaces and caverns were lost in obscurity. The rest was illumined not by lamps or torches but by stars or meteors which diffused a strange and fantastic light, and this light revealed the most astonishing marvels. One saw stupendous edifices hewn out of the solid rocks, and in some places, palaces cut out of granite, of such height that their tracery of stone was lost under the arches of this gigantic cavern in a haze across which fell the orange glimmer of little stars less lustrous than the moon.

There were fortresses in this kingdom, of the most crushing and formidable dimensions; an am-

phitheatre in which the stone seats formed a half-circle whose extent it was impossible to measure at a single glance, and vast wells with sculptured sides, in which one could descend forever and yet never reach the bottom. All these structures, so out of proportion it would seem to the size of the inhabitants, were quite in keeping with their curious and fantastic genius.

Dwarfs in pointed hoods pricked with fern leaves whirled about these edifices in the airiest fashion. It was common to see them leap up to the height of two or three storeys from the lava pavement and rebound like balls, their faces meanwhile preserving that impressive dignity with which sculptors endow the great men of antiquity.

No one was idle and all worked zealously. Entire districts echoed to the sound of hammers. The shrill discord of machinery broke against the arches of the cavern, and it was a curious sight to see the crowds of miners, blacksmiths, gold-beaters, jewellers, diamond polishers, handle pickaxes, hammers, pincers and files with the dexterity of monkeys. However there was a more peaceful region.

Here coarse and powerful figures and shapeless columns loomed in chaotic confusion, hewn out of the virgin rock, and seemed to date back to an immemorial antiquity. Here a palace with low por-

tals extended its ponderous expanse; it was the palace of King Loc.

Directly opposite was the house of Honey-Bee, a house or rather a cottage of one room all hung with white muslin. The furniture of pine-wood perfumed the room. A glimpse of daylight penetrated through a crevice in the rock, and on fine nights one could see the stars.

Honey-Bee had no special attendants, for all the dwarf people were eager to serve her and to anticipate all her wishes except the single one to return to earth.

The most erudite dwarfs, familiar with the profoundest secrets, were glad to teach her, not from books, for dwarfs do not write, but by showing her all the plants of mountains and plains, all the diverse species of animals, and all the varied gems that are extracted from the bosom of the earth. And it was by means of such sights and marvels that they taught her, with an innocent gaiety, the wonders of nature and the processes of the arts.

They made her playthings such as the richest children on earth never have; for these dwarfs were always industrious and invented wonderful machinery. In this way they produced for her dolls that could move with exquisite grace, and express themselves according to the strictest rules of poetry.

Placed on the stage of a little theatre, the scenery of which represented the shores of the sea, the blue sky, palaces and temples, they would pourtray the most interesting events. Though no taller than a man's arm some of them represented respectable old men, others men in the prime of life, and others still beautiful young girls dressed in white.

Among them also were mothers pressing their innocent childern to their hearts. And these eloquent dolls acted as if they were really moved by hate, love and ambition. They passed with the greatest skill from joy to sorrow and they imitated nature so well that they could move one to laughter or to tears. Honey-Bee clapped her hands at the sight. She had a horror of the dolls who tried to be tyrants. On the other hand she felt a boundless compassion for a doll who had once been a princess, and who, now a captive widow, had no other resource alas, by which to save her child, than to marry the barbarian who had made her a widow.

Honey-Bee never tired of this game which the dolls could vary indefinitely. The dwarfs also gave concerts and taught her to play the lute, the viola, the theorbo, the lyre, and various other instruments.

In short she became an excellent musician, and the dramas acted in the theatre by the dolls taught

her a knowledge of men and life. King Loc was always present at the plays and the concerts, but he neither saw nor heard anything but Honey-Bee; little by little he had set his whole heart upon her. In the meantime months passed and even years sped by and Honey-Bee was still among the dwarfs, always amused and yet always longing for earth. She grew up to be a beautiful girl. Her singular destiny had imparted something strange to her appearance, which gave her, however, only an added charm.

XII

In which the treasures of King Loc are described as well as the writer is able

IX years to a day had passed since Honey-Bee had come to live with the dwarfs. King Loc called her into his palace and commanded his treasurer to displace a huge stone which seemed cemented into the wall, but which in reality was only lightly placed there. All three passed through the opening left by the great stone and found themselves in a fissure of rock too narrow for two persons to stand abreast. King Loc preceded the others along the dim path and Honey-Bee followed him holding to a tip of the royal mantle. They walked on for a long time, and at intervals the sides of the rocks came so close together that the young girl was seized with terror lest she should be unable to advance or recede, and so would die there. Before her, along the dark and narrow road floated the mantle of King Loc. At last King Loc came to a bronze door which he opened and out of which poured a blaze of light.

"Little King Loc," said Honey-Bee, "I had no idea that light could be so beautiful!"

And King Loc taking her by the hand led her into the hall out of which the light shone.

"See!" he cried.

Honey-Bee, dazzled, could see nothing, for this immense hall, supported by high marble columns, was a glitter of gold from floor to roof.

At the end on a dais made of glittering gems set in gold and silver, the steps of which were covered by a carpet of marvellous embroidery, stood a throne of ivory and gold under a canopy of translucent enamel, and on each side two palm-trees three thousand years old, stood in gigantic vases carved in some bygone time by the greatest artists among the dwarfs. King Loc mounted his throne and commanded the young girl to stand at his right hand.

"Honey-Bee," said King Loc, "these are my treasures. Choose all that will give you pleasure."

Immense gold shields hung from the columns and reflected the sunlight, and sent it back in glittering rays; swords and lances crossed had each a flame at their point.

Tables along the walls were laden with tankards, flagons, ewers, chalices, pyxes, patens, goblets, gold cups, drinking horns of ivory with silver rings, enormous bottles of rock crystal, chased gold and

silver dishes, coffers, reliquaries in the form of churches, scent-boxes, mirrors, candelabra and torch-holders equally beautiful in material and workmanship, and incense-burners in the shape of monsters. And on one table stood a chessboard with chessmen carved out of moonstones.

"Choose," King Loc repeated.

But lifting her eyes above these treasures, Honey-Bee saw the blue sky through an opening in the roof, and as if she had comprehended that the light of day could alone give all these things their splendour, she said simply:

"Little King Loc, I want to return to earth."

Whereupon King Loc made a sign to his treasurer who, raising heavy tapestries, disclosed an enormous iron-bound coffer covered with plates of open iron-work. This coffer being opened out poured thousands of rays of different and lovely tints, and each ray seemed to leap out of a precious stone most artistically cut. King Loc dipped in his hands and there flowed in glittering confusion violet amethysts, and virgins' stones, emeralds of three kinds, one dark green, another called the honey-emerald because of its colour, and the third a bluish green, also called beryl, which gives happy dreams; oriental topazes, rubies beautiful as the blood of heroes, dark blue sapphires, called the male sapphire, and

the pale blue ones, called the female sapphire, the cymophanes, hyacinths, euclases, turquoises, opals whose light is softer than the dawn, the aquamarine and the Syrian garnet. All these gems were of the purest and most luminous water. And in the midst of these coloured fires great diamonds flashed their rays of dazzling white.

"Choose, Honey-Bee," said King Loc. But Honey-Bee shook her head.

"Little King Loc," she said, "I would rather have a single beam of sunlight that falls on the roof of Clarides than all these gems."

Then King Loc ordered another coffer to be opened, in which were only pearls. But these pearls were round and pure; their changing light reflected all the colours of sea and sky, and their radiance was so tender that they seemed to express a thought of love.

"Accept these," said King Loc.

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, "these pearls are like the glances of George of Blanchelande; I love these pearls, but I love his eyes even more."

Hearing these words King Loc turned his head away. However he opened a third coffer and showed the young girl a crystal in which a drop of

water had been imprisoned since the beginning of time; and when the crystal was moved the drop of water could be seen to stir. He also showed her pieces of yellow amber in which insects more brilliant than jewels had been imprisoned for thousands of years. One could distinguish their delicate feet and their fine antennæ, and they would have resumed their flight had some power but shattered like glass their perfumed prison.

"These are the great marvels of nature; I give them to you, Honey-Bee."

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, "keep your amber and your crystal, for I should not know how to give their freedom either to the fly or the drop of water."

King Loc watched her in silence for some time. Then he said, "Honey-Bee, the most beautiful treasures will be safe in your keeping. You will possess them and they will not possess you. The miser is the prey of his gold, only those who despise wealth, can be rich without danger; their souls will always be greater than their riches."

Having uttered these words he made a sign to his treasurer who presented on a cushion a crown of gold to the young girl.

"Accept this jewel as a sign of our regard for

you," said King Loc. "Henceforth you shall be called the Princess of the Dwarfs."

And he himself placed the crown on the head of Honey-Bee.

XIII

In which King Loc declares himself

HE dwarfs celebrated the crowning of their first princess by joyous revels. Harmless and innocent games succeeded each other in the huge amphitheatre; and the little men, with cockades of fern or two oak leaves fastened coquettishly to their hoods, bounded gaily across the subterranean streets. The rejoicings lasted thirty days. During the universal excitement Pic looked like a mortal inspired; Tad the kind-hearted was intoxicated by the universal joy; Dig the tender gave expression to his delight in tears; Rug, in his ecstasy, again demanded that Honey-Bee should be put in a cage, but this time so that the dwarfs need not be afraid to lose so charming a princess; Bob, mounted on his raven, filled the air with such cries of rapture that the sable bird, infected by the gaiety, gave vent to innumerable playful little croaks.

Only King Loc was sad.

On the thirtieth day, having given the princess

and the dwarf people a festival of unparalleled magnificence, he mounted his throne, and so stood that his kind face just reached her ear.

"My Princess Honey-Bee," he said, "I am about to make a request which you are at liberty either to accept or refuse. Honey-Bee of Clarides, Princess of the Dwarfs, will you be my wife?"

As he spoke, King Loc, grave and tender, had something of the gentle beauty of a majestic poodle.

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, as she pulled his beard, "I am willing to become your wife for fun, but never your wife for good. The moment you asked me to marry you I was reminded of Francœur, who when I was on earth used to amuse me by telling me the most ridiculous stories."

At these words King Loc turned his head away, but not so soon but that Honey-Bee saw the tears in his eyes. Then Honey-Bee was grieved because she had pained him.

"Little King Loc," she said to him, "I love you for the little King Loc you are; and if you make me laugh as Francœur did, there is nothing in that to vex you, for Francœur sang well and he would have been very handsome if it had not been for his grey hair and his red nose."

"Honey-Bee of Clarides, Princess of the Dwarfs," the king replied, "I love you in the hope that some

day you will love me. And yet without that hope I should love you just the same. The only return I ask for my friendship is that you will always be honest with me."

"Little King Loc, I promise."

"Well then, tell me truly, Honey-Bee, do you love some one else enough to marry him?"

"Little King Loc, I love no one enough for that."

Whereupon King Loc smiled, and seizing his golden cup he proposed, with a resounding voice, the health of the Princess of the Dwarfs. An immense uproar rose from the depths of the earth, for the banquet table reached from one end to the other of the Empire of the Dwarfs.

XIV

In which we are told how Honey-Bee saw her mother again, but could not embrace her

HONEY-BEE, a crown on her head, was now more often sad and lost in thought than when her hair flowed loose over her shoulders, and when she went laughing to the forge and pulled the beards of her good friends Pic, Tad and Dig, whose faces, red from the reflected flames, gave her a gay welcome. But now these good dwarfs, who had once danced her on their knees and called her Honey-Bee, bowed as she passed and maintained a respectful silence. She grieved because she was no longer a child, and she suffered because she was the Princess of the dwarfs.

It was no longer a pleasure for her to see King Loc, since she had seen him weep because of her. But she loved him, for he was good and unhappy. One day, if one may say that there are days in the empire of the dwarfs, she took King Loc by the hand and drew him under the cleft in the rock, through which a sunbeam shone, along whose rays there danced a haze of golden dust.

"Little King Loc," she said, "I suffer. You are a king and you love me and I suffer."

Hearing these words from the pretty damsel, King Loc replied:

"I love you, Honey-Bee of Clarides, Princess of the Dwarfs; and that is why I have held you captive in our world, in order to teach you our secrets, which are greater and more wonderful than all those you could learn on earth amongst men, for men are less skilful and less learned than the dwarfs."

"Yes," said Honey-Bee, "but they are more like me than are the dwarfs, and for that reason I love them better. Little King Loc, let me see my mother again if you do not wish me to die."

Without replying King Loc went away. Honey-Bee, desolate and alone, watched the ray of light which bathes the whole face of nature and which enfolds all the living, even to the beggars by the wayside, in its resplendent waves. Slowly this ray paled, and its golden radiance faded to a pale blue light. Night had come upon earth. A star twinkled over the cleft in the rock.

Then some one gently touched her on the shoulder, and she saw King Loc wrapped in a black cloak. He had another cloak on his arm with which he covered the young girl.

"Come," said he.

And he led her out of the underworld. When she saw again the trees stirred by the wind, the clouds that floated across the moon, the splendour of the night so fresh and blue, when she breathed again the fragrance of the herbage, and when the air she had breathed in childhood again entered her breast in floods, she gave a great sigh and thought to die of joy.

King Loc had taken her in his arms; small though he was, he carried her as lightly as a feather, and they glided over the ground like the shadows of two birds.

"You shall see your mother again, Honey-Bee. But listen! You know that every night I send her your image. Every night she sees your dear phantom; she smiles upon it, she talks to it and she caresses it. To-night she shall, instead, see you yourself. You will see her, but you must not touch her, you must not speak to her, or the charm will be broken and she will never again see you nor your image, which she does not distinguish from you."

"Then I will be prudent, alas! little King Loc! . . . See! See!" . . .

Sure enough the watch-tower of Clarides rose black on the hill. Honey-Bee had hardly time to

throw a kiss to the beloved old stone walls when the ramparts of the town of Clarides, overgrown with gillyflowers already flew past; already she was ascending the terrace, where glow-worms glimmer in the grass, to the postern, which King Loc easily opened, for the dwarfs are masters of metals, nor can locks, padlocks, bolts, chains or bars ever stop them.

She climbed the winding stairs that led to her mother's room, and she paused to clasp her beating heart with both her hands. Softly the door opened, and by the light of a night lamp that hung from the ceiling she saw her mother in the holy silence that reigned, her mother frailer and paler, with hair grey at the temples, but in the eyes of her daughter more beautiful even than in past days as she remembered her riding fearlessly in magnificent attire. As usual the mother beheld her daughter as in a dream, and she opened her arms as if to caress her. And the child, laughing and sobbing, was about to throw herself into those open arms; but King Loc tore her away, and like a wisp of straw he bore her through the blue landscape to the Kingdom of the dwarfs.

XV

In which we shall see how King Loc suffered

EATED on the granite step of the underground palace, Honey-Bee watched the blue sky through the cleft in the rock, and saw the elder-trees turn their spreading white parasols to the light. She began to weep.

"Honey-Bee," said King Loc as he took her hand in his, "why do you weep, and what is it you desire?"

And as she had been grieving these many days, the dwarfs at her feet tried to cheer her with simple airs on the flute, the flageolet, the rebeck, and the cymbals. And other dwarfs, to amuse her, turned such somersaults one after the other that they pricked the grass with the points of their hoods with their cockades of leaves, and nothing could be more charming than to watch the capers of these tiny men with their venerable beards. Tad so kind and Dig so wise, who had loved her since the day they had found her asleep on the shore of the lake, and Pic, the elderly poet, gently took her arm and implored her to tell them the cause of her grief.

Pau, a simple just soul, offered her a basket of grapes, and all of them gently pulled the edge of her skirt and said with King Loc:

"Honey-Bee, Princess of the Dwarfs, why do you weep?"

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, "and you, little men, my grief only increases your love, because you are good; you weep with me. Know that I weep when I think of George of Blanchelande, who should now be a cavalier, but whom I shall never see again. I love him and I wish to be his wife."

King Loc took his hand away from the hand he had pressed.

"Honey-Bee," he said, "why did you deceive me when you told me at the banquet that you loved no one else?"

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, "I did not deceive you at the banquet. At that time I had no desire to marry George of Blanchelande, but to-day it is my dearest wish that he should ask to marry me. But he will never ask me, as I do not know where he is, nor does he know where I am. And this is the reason I weep."

At these words the musicians ceased playing; the acrobats interrupted their tumbling and stood immovable, some on their heads and some on their

haunches; Tad and Dig shed silent tears on the sleeve of Honey-Bee; Pau, simple soul, dropped his basket of grapes, and all the little men gave vent to the most fearful groan.

But King Loc, more unhappy than all under his splendid jewelled crown, silently withdrew, his mantle trailing behind him like a purple torrent.

XVI

In which an account is given of the learned Nur who was the cause of such extraordinary joy to King Loc

KING LOC did not permit the young girl to observe his weakness; but when he was alone he sat on the ground and with his feet in his hands gave way to grief. He was jealous.

"She loves him," he said to himself, "and she does not love me! And yet I am a king and very wise; great treasures are mine and I know the most marvellous secrets. I am superior to all other dwarfs, who are in turn superior to all men. She does not love me but she loves a young man who not only has not the learning of the dwarfs, but no other learning either.

"It must be acknowledged that she does not appreciate merit—nor has she much sense. I ought to laugh at her want of judgment; but I love her and I care for nothing in the world because she does not love me."

For many long days King Loc roamed alone through the most desolate mountain passes, turn-

ing over in his mind thoughts both sad and, sometimes, wicked. He even thought of trying by imprisonment and starvation to force Honey-Bee to become his wife. But rejecting this plan as soon as formed he decided to go in search of her and throw himself at her feet. But he could come to no decision, and at last he was quite at a loss what to do. The truth being that whether Honey-Bee would love him did not depend on him.

Suddenly his anger turned against George of Blanchelande; and he hoped that the young man had been carried far away by some enchanter, and that at any rate, should he ever hear of Honey-Bee's love, he would disdain it.

"Without being old," the king meditated, "I have already lived too long not to have suffered sometimes. And yet my sufferings, intense though they were, were less painful than those of which I am conscious to-day. With the tenderness and pity which caused them was mingled something of their own divine sweetness. Now, on the contrary, my grief has the baseness and bitterness of an evil desire. My soul is desolate and the tears in my eyes are like an acid that burns them."

So thought King Loc. And fearing that jealousy might make him unjust and wicked he avoided meeting the young girl, for fear that in spite of himself,

he might use towards her the language of a man either weak or brutal.

One day when he was more than ever tormented by the thought that Honey-Bee loved George, he decided to consult Nur, the most learned of all the dwarfs, who lived at the bottom of a well deep down in the bowels of the earth.

This well had the advantage of an even and soft temperature. It was not dark, for two little stars, a pale sun and a red moon, alternately illumined all parts. King Loc descended into the well and found Nur in his laboratory. Nur looked like a kind little old man, and he wore a sprig of wild thyme in his hood. In spite of his learning he had the innocence and candour characteristic of his race.

"Nur," said the king as he embraced him, "I have come to consult you because you know many things."

"King Loc," replied Nur, "I might know a good deal and yet be an idiot. But I possess the knowledge of how to learn some of the innumerable things I do not know, and that is the reason I am so justly famous for my learning."

"Well, then," said King Loc, "can you tell me the whereabouts at present a young man by the name of George of Blanchelande?"

"I do not know and I never cared to know," replied Nur. "Knowing as I do the ignorance,

stupidity and wickedness of mankind, I don't trouble myself as to what they say or do. Humanity, King Loc, would be entirely deplorable and ridiculous if it were not that something of value is given to this proud and miserable race, inasmuch as the men are endowed with courage, the women with beauty, and the little children with innocence. Obliged by necessity, as are also the dwarfs, to toil, mankind has rebelled against this divine law, and instead of being, like ourselves, willing and cheerful toilers, they prefer war to work, and they would rather kill each other than help each other. But to be just one must admit that their shortness of life is the principal cause of their ignorance and cruelty. Their life is too short for them to learn how to live. The race of the dwarfs who dwell under the earth is happier and better. If we are not immortal we shall at least last as long as the earth which bears us in her bosom, and which permeates us with her intimate and fruitful warmth, while for the races born on her rugged surface she has only the turbulent winds which sometimes scorch and sometimes freeze, and whose breath is at once the bearer of death and life. And yet men owe to their overwhelming miseries and wickedness a virtue which makes the souls of some amongst them more beautiful than the souls of dwarfs. And this virtue, O

King Loc, which for the mind is what the soft radiance of pearls is for the eyes, is pity. It is taught by suffering, and the dwarfs know it but little, because being wiser than men they escape much anguish. Yet sometimes the dwarfs leave their deep grottoes and seek the pitiless surface of the earth to mingle with men so as to love them, to suffer with them and through them, and thus to feel this pity which refreshes the soul like a heavenly dew. This is the truth concerning men, King Loc. But did you not ask me as to the exact fate of some one amongst them?"

Kink Loc having repeated his question, Nur looked into one of the many telescopes which filled the room. For the dwarfs have no books, those which are found amongst them have come from men, and are only used as playthings. They do not learn as we do by consulting marks on paper, but they look through telescopes and see the subject itself of their inquiry. The only difficulty is to choose the right telescope and get the right focus.

There are telescopes of crystal, of topaz and of opal; but those whose lens is a great polished diamond are more powerful, and permit them to see the most distant objects.

The dwarfs also have lenses of a translucent substance unknown to men. These enable the sight to

pass through rocks and walls as if they were glass. Others, more remarkable still, reconstruct as accurately as a mirror all that has vanished with the flight of time. For the dwarfs, in the depths of their caverns, have the power to recall from the infinite surface of the ether, the light of immemorial days and the forms and colours of vanished times. They can create for themselves a phantasm of the past by re-arranging the splinters of light which were once shattered against the forms of men, animals, plants and rocks, so that they again flash across the centuries through the unfathomable ether.

The venerable Nur excelled in discovering figures of antiquity and even such, inconceivable though it may seem, as lived before the earth had assumed the shape with which we are familiar. So it was really no trouble at all for him to find George of Blanchelande.

Having looked for a moment through a very ordinary telescope indeed, he said to King Loc:

"King Loc, he for whom you search is with the nixies in their palace of crystal, from which none ever return, and whose iridescent walls adjoin your kingdom."

"Is he there?" cried the king. "Let him stay!" and he rubbed his hands. "I wish him joy."

And having embraced the venerable dwarf, he emerged out of the well roaring with laughter.

The whole length of the road he held his sides so as to laugh at his ease; his head shook, and his beard swung backwards and forwards on his stomach. How he laughed! The little men who met him laughed out of sheer sympathy. Seeing them laugh made others laugh. A contagion of laughter spread from place to place until the whole interior of the earth was shaken as if with a mighty and jovial hiccough. Ha! ha! ha!

XVII

Which tells of the wonderful adventure of George of Blanchelande

ING LOC did not laugh long; indeed he hid the face of a very unhappy little man under the bed-clothes.

He lay awake all night thinking of George of Blanchelande, the prisoner of the nixies.

So about the hour when such of the dwarfs as have a dairymaid for sweetheart go in her stead to milk the cows while she sleeps in her white bed with folded hands, little King Loc again sought the astute Nur in the depths of his well.

"You did not tell me, Nur, what he is doing down there with the nixies?"

The venerable Nur was quite convinced that the king was mad, though that did not alarm him because he knew if King Loc should lose his reason he would be a most gracious, charming, amiable and kindly lunatic. The madness of the dwarf is gentle like their reason, and full of the most delicious fancies. But King Loc was not mad; at least not more so than lovers usually are.

"I wish to speak of George of Blanchelande," he said to the venerable Nur, who had forgotten all about this young man as soon as possible.

Thereupon Nur the wise placed a series of lenses and mirrors before the king in an order so exact that it looked like disorder, but which enabled him to show the king in a mirror the form of George of Blanchelande as he was when the nixies carried him away. By a lucky choice and a skilful adjustment of instruments the dwarf was able to reproduce for the love-sick king all the adventures of the son of that Countess to whom a white rose announced her end. And the following, expressed in words, is what the little man saw in all the reality of form and colour.

When George was borne away in the icy arms of the daughters of the lake the water pressed upon his eyes and his breast and he felt that he was about to die. And yet he heard songs that sounded like a caress and his whole being was permeated by a sense of delicious freshness. When he opened his eyes he found himself in a grotto whose crystal columns reflected the delicate tints of the rainbow. At the end of the grotto was a great sea shell of mother-of-pearl iridescent with the tenderest colours, and this served as a dais to the throne of coral and seaweed of the Queen of the Nixies. But the

face of the Sovereign of the waters shone with a light more tender than either the mother-of-pearl or the crystal. She smiled at the child which her women brought her, and her green eyes lingered long upon him.

"Friend," she said at last, "be welcome into our world, in which you shall be spared all sorrow. For you neither dry lessons nor rough sports; nothing coarse shall remind you of earth and its toil, for you only the songs and the dances and the love of the nixies."

And indeed the women of the green hair taught the child music and dancing and a thousand graces. They loved to bind his forehead with the cockle shells that decked their own tresses. But he, remembering his country, gnawed his clenched hands with impatience.

Years passed and George longed with a passion unceasing to see the earth again, the rude earth where the sun burns and where the snow hardens, the mother earth where one suffers, where one loves, the earth where he had seen Honey-Bee, and where he longed to see her again. He had in the meantime grown to be a tall lad with a fine golden down on his upper lip. Courage came with the beard, and so one day he presented himself before the Queen of the Nixies and bowing low, said:

"Madam, I have come, with your gracious permission, to take leave of you; I am about to return to Clarides."

"Fair youth," the queen replied smiling, "I cannot grant you the leave you ask, for I guard you in my crystal palace, to make of you my lover."

"Madam," he replied, "I am not worthy of so great an honour."

"That is but your courtesy. What gallant cavalier ever believes that he has sufficiently deserved his lady's favour. Besides you are still too young to know your own worth. Let me tell you, fair youth, that we do but desire your welfare; obey your lady and her alone."

"Madam, I love Honey-Bee of Clarides. I will have no other lady but her."

"A mortal maid!" the queen cried, turning pale, but more beautiful still, "a coarse daughter of men, this Honey-Bee! How can you love such a thing?"

"I do not know, but I know that I love her."

"Never mind. It will pass."

And she still held the young man captive by means of the allurements of her crystal abode.

He did not comprehend the devious thing called a woman; he was more like Achilles among the daughters of Lycomedes than Tannhaüser in the enchanted castle. And that is why he wandered

sadly along the walls of the mighty palace searching for an outlet through which to escape; but he only saw the splendid and silent empire of the waves sealing his shining prison. Through the transparent walls he watched the blooming sea anemones and the spreading coral, while over the delicate stems of the madrepores and the sparkling shells, purple, blue, and gold fishes made a glitter of stars with a stroke of their tails. These marvels he left unheeded, for, lulled by the delicious songs of the nixies, he felt little by little his will broken and his soul grow weak. He was all indolence and indifference when one day he found by chance in a gallery of the palace, an ancient well-worn book bound in pigskin and studded with great copper nail-heads. The book, saved from some wreck in mid-ocean, treated of chivalry and fair ladies, and related at great length the adventures of heroes who went about the world redressing wrongs, protecting widows and succouring orphans for the love of justice and in honour of beauty. George flushed and paled with wonder, shame, and anger as he read these tales of splendid adventures. He could not contain himself.

"I also," he cried, "will be a gallant knight. I also will go about the world punishing the wicked and succouring the unfortunate for the good of

mankind and in the name of my lady Honey-Bee."

With sword drawn and his heart big with valour he dashed across the crystal dwellings. The white ladies fled and swooned before him like the silver ripples of a lake. Their queen alone beheld his approach without a tremor; she turned on him the icy glance of her green eyes.

"Break the enchantment which binds me," he cried, running towards her. "Open to me the road to earth. I wish to fight in the light of the sun like a cavalier. I wish to return to where one loves, to where one suffers, to where one struggles! Give back to me the life that is real and the light that is real. Give me back my prowess! If not, I will kill you, you wicked woman!"

With a smile she shook her head as if to refuse. Beautiful she was and serene. With all the strength that was in him George struck her; but his sword broke against her glittering breast.

"Child!" she said, and she commanded that he be cast into a dungeon which formed a kind of crystal tunnel under her palace, and about which sharks roamed with wide-stretched monstrous jaws armed with triple rows of pointed teeth. At every touch it seemed as if they must crush the frail glass wall, which made it impossible to sleep in this strange prison.

The extremity of this under-sea tunnel rested on a bed of rock which formed the vaulting of the most distant and unexplored cavern in the empire of the dwarfs.

And this is what the two little men saw in a single hour and quite as accurately as if they had followed George all the days of his life. The venerable Nur, having described the dungeon scene in all its tragic gloom, addressed the King in much the same way as the Savoyards speak to the little children when they show their magic lanterns.

"King Loc," he said, "I have shown you all you wished to see, and now that you know all I can add nothing more. It's nothing to me whether you liked what you saw; it is enough to know that what you saw was the truth. Science neither cares to please nor to displease. She is inhuman. It is not science but poetry that charms and consoles. And that is why poetry is more necessary than science. Go, King Loc, and get them to sing you a song."

And without uttering a word King Loc left the well.

XVIII

In which King Loc undertakes a terrible journey

AVING left the well of wisdom, King Loc went to his treasure house and out of a casket, of which he alone had the key, he took a ring which he placed on his finger. The stone set in the ring emitted a brilliant light, for it was a magic stone of whose power we shall learn more further on. Thereupon King Loc went to his palace, put on a travelling cloak and thick boots and took a stick; then he started on a journey across crowded streets, great highways, villages, galleries of porphyry, torrents of rock-oil, and crystal grottoes, all of which communicated with each other through narrow openings.

He seemed lost in deep meditation and he uttered words that had no meaning. But he trudged on doggedly. Mountains obstructed his path and he climbed the mountains. Precipices opened under his feet and he descended into the precipices; he forded streams, he crossed horrible regions black with the fumes of sulphur. He trudged across burning lava on which his feet left their imprint;

he had the appearance of a desperately dogged traveller. He penetrated into gloomy caverns into which the water of the ocean oozed drop by drop, and flowed like tears along the sea wrack, forming pools on the uneven ground where countless crustaceans increased and multiplied into hideous shapes. Enormous crabs, crayfish, giant lobsters and sea spiders crackled under the dwarf's feet, then crawled away leaving some of their claws behind, and in their flight rousing horrible molluscs and octopuses centuries old that suddenly writhed their hundred arms and spat fetid poison out of their bird-beaks. And yet King Loc went on undaunted. He made his way to the ends of these caverns, through the midst of a heaped up chaos of shelled monsters armed with spikes, with double saw-edged nippers, with claws that crept stealthily up to his neck and bleared eyes on swaying tentacles. He crept up the sides of the cavern by clinging to the rough surface of the rocks and the mailed monsters crept with him, but he never faltered until he recognised by touch a stone that projected from the centre of the natural arch. He touched the stone with his magic ring and suddenly it rolled away with a horrible crash, and at once a glory of light flooded the cavern with its beautiful waves and put to flight the swarming monsters bred in its gloom.

As King Loc thrust his head into the opening through which daylight poured, he saw George of Blanchelande in his glass dungeon where he was lamenting grievously as he thought of Honey-Bee and of earth. For King Loc had undertaken this subterranean journey only to deliver the captive of the nixies.

But seeing this huge dishevelled head, frowning and bearded, watching him from under his tunnel, George believed himself to be menaced by a mighty danger and he felt for the sword at his side forgetting that he had broken it against the breast of the woman with the green eyes. In the meantime King Loc examined him curiously.

"Bah," said he to himself, "it is only a child!"

"And indeed he was only an ignorant child and it was because of his great ignorance that he had escaped from the deadly and delicious kisses of the Queen of the Nixies. Aristotle with all his wisdom might not have done so well.

"What do you want, fathead?" George cried, seeing himself defenceless, "why harm me if I have never harmed you?"

"Little one," King Loc replied in a voice at once jovial and testy, "you do not know whether or not you have harmed me, for you are ignorant of effects and causes and reflections, and all philosophy in

general. But we'll not talk of that. If you don't mind leaving your tunnel, come this way."

George at once crept into the cavern, slipped down the length of the wall, and as soon as he had reached the bottom he said to his deliverer:

"You are a good little man; I shall love you for ever; but do you know where Honey-Bee of Clarides is?"

"I know a great many things," retorted the dwarf, "and especially that I don't like people who ask questions."

Hearing this George paused in great confusion and followed his guide in silence through the dense black air where the octopuses and crustaceans writhed. King Loc said mockingly:

"This is not a carriage road, young prince."

"Sir," George replied, "the road to liberty is always beautiful, and I fear not to be led astray when I follow my benefactor."

Little King Loc bit his lips. On reaching the gallery of porphyry he pointed out to the youth a flight of steps cut in the rock by the dwarfs, by which they ascend to earth.

"This is your way," he said, "farewell."

"Do not bid me farewell," George replied, "say I shall see you again. After what you have done my life is yours."

"What I have done," King Loc replied, "I have not done for your sake, but for another's. It will be better for us never to meet again, for we can never be friends."

"I would not have believed that my deliverance could have caused such pain," George said simply and gravely, "and yet it does. Farewell."

"A pleasant journey," cried King Loc, in a gruff voice.

Now it happened that these steps of the dwarfs adjoined a deserted stone quarry less than a mile from the castle of Clarides.

"This young lad," King Loc murmured as he went on his way, "has neither the wisdom nor the wealth of the dwarfs. Truly I cannot imagine why Honey-Bee loves him, unless it is because he is young, handsome, faithful and brave."

As he went back to the town he laughed to himself as a man does who has done some one a good turn. As he passed Honey-Bee's cottage he thrust his big head into the open window just as he had thrust it into the crystal tunnel, and he saw the young girl, who was embroidering a veil with silver flowers.

"I wish you joy, Honey-Bee," he cried.

"And you also, little King Loc, seeing you have nothing to wish for and nothing to regret."

He had much to wish for, but, indeed, he had nothing to regret. And it was probably this which gave him such a good appetite for supper. Having eaten a huge number of truffled pheasants he called Bob.

"Bob," said he, "mount your raven; go to the Princess of the Dwarfs and tell her that George of Blanchelande, long a captive of the nixes, has this day returned to Clarides."

Thus he spoke and Bob flew off on his raven.

XIX

Which tells of the extraordinary encounter of Jean the master tailor, and of the blessed song the birds in the grove sang to the duchess

HEN George again found himself on the earth on which he was born, the very first person he met was Jean, the master tailor, with a red suit of clothes on his arm for the steward of the castle. The good man shrieked at sight of his young master.

"Holy St. James," he cried, "if you are not his lordship George of Blanchelande who was drowned in the lake seven years ago, you are either his ghost or the devil in person."

"I am neither ghost nor devil, good Jean, but I am truly that same George of Blanchelande who used to creep to your shop and beg bits of stuff out of which to make dresses for the dolls of my sister Honey-Bee."

"Then you were not drowned, your lordship," the good man exclaimed. "I am so glad! And how well you look. My little Peter who climbed into my arms to see you pass on horseback by the

side of the Duchess that Sunday morning has become a good workman and a fine fellow. He is all of that, God be praised, your lordship. He will be glad to hear that you are not at the bottom of the sea, and that the fish have not eaten you as he always declared. He was in the habit of saying many pleasant things about it, your lordship, for he is very amusing. And it is a fact that you are much mourned in Clarides. You were such a promising child. I shall remember to my dying day how you once asked me for a needle to sew with, and as I refused, for you were not of an age to use it without danger, you replied you would go to the woods and pick beautiful green pine needles. That is what you said, and it still makes me laugh. Upon my soul you said that. Our little Peter, also, used to say clever things. Now he is a cooper and at your service, your lordship."

"I shall employ no one else. But give me news of Honey-Bee and the Duchess, Master Jean."

"Alack, where do you come from, your lordship, seeing that you do not know that it is now seven years since the Princess Honey-Bee was stolen by the dwarfs of the mountain? She disappeared the very day you were drowned; and one can truly say that on that day Clarides lost its sweetest flowers. The Duchess is in deep mourning. And it's that

which makes me say that the great of the earth have their sorrows just as well as the humblest artisans, if only to prove that we are all the sons of Adam. And because of this a cat may well look at a king, as the saying is. And by the same token the good Duchess has seen her hair grow white and her gaiety vanish. And when in the springtime she walks in her black robes along the hedgerow where the birds sing, the smallest of these is more to be envied than the sovereign lady of Clarides. And yet her grief is not quite without hope, your lordship; for though she has had no tidings of you, she at least knows by dreams that her daughter Honey-Bee is alive."

This and much else said good man Jean, but George listened no longer after he heard that Honey-Bee was a captive among the dwarfs.

"The dwarfs hold Honey-Bee captive under the earth," he pondered; "a dwarf rescued me from my crystal dungeon; these little men have not all the same customs; my deliverer cannot be of the same race as those who stole my sister."

He knew not what to think except that he must rescue Honey-Bee.

In the meantime they crossed the town, and on their way the gossips standing on the thresholds of their houses asked each other who was this young stranger, but they all agreed that he was very hand-

some. The better informed amongst them, having recognised the young lord of Blanchelande, decided that it must be his ghost, wherefore they fled, making great signs of the cross.

"He must be sprinkled with holy water," said one old crone, "and he will vanish leaving a disgusting smell of sulphur. He will carry away Master Jean, and he will of course plunge him alive into the fire of hell."

"Softly! old woman," a citizen replied, "his lordship is alive and much more alive than you or I. He is as fresh as a rose, and he looks as if he had come from some noble court rather than from the other world. One does return from afar, good dame. As witness Francœur the squire who came back from Rome last midsummer day."

And Margaret the helmet-maker, having greatly admired George, mounted to her maiden chamber and kneeling before the image of the Holy Virgin prayed, "Holy Virgin, grant me a husband who shall look precisely like this young lord."

So each in his way talked of George's return until the news spread from mouth to mouth and finally reached the ears of the Duchess who was walking in the orchard. Her heart beat violently and she heard all the birds in the hedge-row sing:

"Cui, cui, cui,
Oui, oui, oui,
Georges de Blanchelande,
Cui, cui, cui,
Dont vous avez nourri l'enfance
Cui, cui, cui.
Est ici, est ici, est ici!
Oui, oui, oui."

Francœur approached her respectfully and said: "Your grace, George de Blanchelande whom you thought dead has returned. I shall make it into a song."

In the meantime the birds sang:

"Cucui, cui, i, cui, cui, cui,
Oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, oui,
Il est ici, ici, ici, ici, ici, ici."

And when she saw the child who had been to her as a son, she opened her arms and fell senseless at his feet.

XX

Which treats of a little satin shoe

EVERYBODY in Clarides was quite convinced that Honey-Bee had been stolen by the dwarfs. Even the Duchess believed it, though her dreams did not tell her precisely.

"We will find her again," said George.

"We will find her again," replied Francœur.

"And we will bring her back to her mother," said George.

"And we will bring her back," replied Francœur.

"And we will marry her," said George.

"And we will marry her," replied Francœur.

And they inquired among the inhabitants as to the habits of the dwarfs and the mysterious circumstances of Honey-Bee's disappearance.

And so it happened that they questioned Nurse Maurille who had once been the nurse of the Duchess of Clarides; but now as she had no more milk for babies Maurille instead nursed the chickens in the poultry yard. It was there that the master and squire found her. She cried: "Psit! Psit!

Psit! psit! lil—lil—lil—lil—psit—psit, psit, psit!" as she threw grain to the chicks.

"Psit, psit, psit, psit! Is it you, your lordship? Psit, psit, psit! Is it possible that you have grown so tall—psit! and so handsome? Psit, psit! Shoo! shoo! shoo! Just look at that fat one there eating the little one's portion! Shoo, shoo, shoo! The way of the world, your lordship. Riches go to the rich, lean ones grow leaner, while the fat ones grow fatter. There's no justice on earth! What can I do for you my lord? May I offer you each a glass of beer?"

"We will accept it gladly, Maurille, and I must embrace you because you nursed the mother of her whom I love best on earth."

"That's true, my lord, my foster child cut her first tooth at the age of six months and fourteen days. On which occasion the deceased duchess made me a present. She did indeed."

"Now, Maurille, tell us all you know about the dwarfs who carried away Honey-Bee."

"Alas, my lord, I know nothing of the dwarfs who carried her away. And how can you expect an old woman like me to know anything? It's ages ago since I forgot the little I ever knew, and I haven't even enough memory left to remember where I put my spectacles. Sometimes I look for

them when they're on my nose. Try this drink; it's fresh."

"Here's to your health, Maurille; but I was told that your husband knew something about the disappearance of Honey-Bee."

"That's true, your lordship. Though he never was taught anything he learnt a great deal in the pot-houses and taverns. And he never forgot anything. Why if he were alive now and sitting at this table he could tell me stories until to-morrow. He used to tell me so many that they quite muddled my head and even now I can't tell the tail of one from the head of the other. That's true, your lordship."

Indeed, it was true, for the head of the old nurse could only be compared to a cracked soup-pot. It was with the greatest difficulty that George and Francœur got anything good out of it. Finally, however, by means of much repetition they did extract a tale which began somewhat as follows:

"It's seven years ago, your lordship, the very day you and Honey-Bee went on that frolic from which neither of you ever returned. My deceased husband went up the mountain to sell a horse. That's the truth. He fed the beast with a good peck of oats soaked in cider to give him a firm leg and a brilliant eye; he took him to market near the moun-

tain. He had no cause to regret his oats or his cider, for he sold his horse for a much better price. Beasts are like human beings; one judges them by their appearance. My deceased husband was so rejoiced at his good stroke of business that he invited his friends to drink with him, and glass in hand he drank to their health.

"You must know, your lordship, that there wasn't a man in all Clarides could equal my husband when glass in hand he drank to the health of his friends. So much so that on that day, after a number of such compliments, when he returned alone at twilight he took the wrong road for the reason that he could not recognise the right one. Finding himself near a cavern he saw as distinctly as possible, considering his condition and the hour, a crowd of little men carrying a girl or a boy on a litter. He ran away for fear of ill-luck; for the wine had not robbed him of prudence. But at some distance from the cavern he dropped his pipe, and on stooping to pick it up he picked up instead a little satin shoe. When he was in a good humour he used to amuse himself by saying, 'It's the first time a pipe has changed into a shoe.' And as it was the shoe of a little girl he decided that she who had lost it in the forest was the one who had been carried away by the dwarfs and that it was this he had seen. He was about to put

the shoe into his pocket when a crowd of little men in hoods pounced down on him and gave him such a thrashing that he lay there quite stunned."

"Maurille! Maurille!" cried George, "it's Honey-Bee's shoe. Give it to me and I will kiss it a thousand times. It shall rest for ever on my heart, and when I die it shall be buried with me."

"As you please, your lordship; but where will you find it? The dwarfs took it away from my poor husband and he always thought that they only gave him such a sound thrashing because he wanted to put it in his pocket to show to the magistrates. He used to say when he was in a good humour——"

"Enough—enough! Only tell me the name of the cavern!"

"It is called the cavern of the dwarfs, your lordship, and very well named too. My deceased husband——"

"Not another word, Maurille! But you. Francœur, do you know where this cavern is?"

"Your lordship," replied Francœur as he emptied the pot of beer, "you would certainly know it if you knew my songs better. I have written at least a dozen about this cavern, and I've described it without even forgetting a single sprig of moss. I venture to say, your lordship, that of these dozen songs, six are of great merit. And even the other six

are not to be despised. I will sing you one or two. . . ."

"Francœur," cried George, "we will take possession of this cavern of the dwarfs and rescue Honey-Bee."

"Of course we will!" replied Francœur.

XXI

In which a perilous adventure is described

HAT night when all were asleep George and Francœur crept into the lower hall in search of weapons. Lances, swords, dirks, broadswords, hunting-knives and daggers glittered under the time-stained rafters—everything necessary to kill both man and brute. A complete suit of armour stood upright under each beam in an attitude as resolute and proud as if it were still filled with the soul of the brave man it had once decked for mighty adventures. The gauntlet grasped the lance in its ten iron fingers, while the shield rested against the plates of the greaves as if to prove that prudence is necessary to courage, and that the best fighter is armed as well for defence as for attack.

From among all these suits of armour George chose the one that Honey-Bee's father had worn as far away as the isles of Avalon and Thule. He donned it with the aid of Francœur, nor did he forget the shield on which was emblazoned the golden sun of Clarides. As for Francœur, he put on a good old steel coat of mail of his grandfather's and

on his head a casque of a bygone time, to which he attached a ragged and moth-eaten tuft or plume. This he chose merely as a matter of fancy and to give himself an air of rejoicing, for, as he justly reasoned, gaiety, which is good under every circumstance, is especially so in the face of great dangers.

Having thus armed themselves they passed under the light of the moon into the dark open country. Francœur had fastened the horses on the edge of a little grove near the postern, and there he found them nibbling at the bark of the bushes; they were swift steeds, and it took them less than an hour to reach the mountain of the dwarfs, through a crowd of goblins and phantoms.

"Here is the cave," said Francœur.

Master and man dismounted and, sword in hand, penetrated into the cavern. It required great courage to attempt such an adventure; but George was in love and Francœur was faithful, and this was a case in which one could say with the most delightful of poets:

"What may not friendship do with Love for guide!"

Master and man had trudged through the gloom for nearly an hour when they were astonished to see a brilliant light. It was one of the meteors which we know illumines the kingdom of the dwarfs. By the light of this subterranean luminary they dis-

covered that they were standing at the foot of an ancient castle.

"This," said George, "is the castle we must capture."

"To be sure," said Francœur; "but first permit me to drink a few drops of this wine which I brought with me as a precaution, because the better the wine the better the man, and the better the man the better the lance, the better the lance the less dangerous the enemy."

George, seeing no living soul, struck the hilt of his sword sharply against the door of the castle. He looked up at the sound of a little tremulous voice, and he saw at one of the windows a little old man with a long beard, who asked:

"Who are you?"

"George of Blanchelande."

"And what do you want?"

"I have come to deliver Honey-Bee of Clarides whom you unjustly hold captive in your mole-hill, hideous little moles that you are!"

The dwarf disappeared and again George was left alone with Francœur who said to him:

"Your lordship, possibly I may exaggerate if I remark that in your answer to the dwarf you have not quite exhausted all the persuasive powers of eloquence."

Francœur was afraid of nothing, but he was old; his heart like his head was polished by age, and he disliked to offend people.

As for George he stormed and clamoured at the top of his voice.

"Vile dwellers in the earth, moles, badgers, dormice, ferrets, and water-rats, open the door and I'll cut off all your ears."

But hardly had he uttered these words when the bronze door of the castle slowly opened itself, for no one could be seen pushing back its enormous wings.

George was seized with terror and yet he sprang through the mysterious door because his courage was even greater than his terror. Entering the courtyard he saw that all the windows, the galleries, the roofs, the gables, the skylights, and even the chimney-pots, were crowded with dwarfs armed with bows and cross-bows.

He heard the bronze door close behind him and suddenly a shower of arrows fell thick and fast on his head and shoulders, and for the second time he was filled with a great fear, and for the second time he conquered his fear.

Sword in hand and his shield on his arm he mounted the steps until suddenly he perceived on the very highest, a majestic dwarf who stood there

in serene dignity, gold sceptre in hand and wearing the royal crown and the purple mantle. And in this dwarf he recognised the little man who had delivered him out of his crystal dungeon.

Thereupon he threw himself at his feet and cried weeping:

"O my benefactor, who are you? Are you one of those who have robbed me of Honey-Bee, whom I love?"

"I am King Loc," replied the dwarf. "I have kept Honey Bee with me to teach her the wisdom of the dwarfs. Child, you have fallen into my kingdom like a hail-storm in a garden of flowers. But the dwarfs less weak than men are never angered as are they. My intelligence raises me too high above you for me to resent your actions whatever they are. And of all the attributes that render me superior to you that which I guard most jealousy is justice. Honey-Bee shall be brought before me and I will ask her if she wishes to follow you. This I do, not because you desire it, but because I must."

A great silence ensued and Honey-Bee appeared attired all in white and with flowing golden hair. No sooner did she see George than she ran and threw herself in his arms and clasped his iron breast with all her strength.

Then King Loc said to her:

"Honey-Bee, is it true that this is the man you wish to marry?"

"It is true, very true that this is he, little King Loc," replied Honey-Bee. "See, all you little men, how I laugh and how happy I am."

And she began to weep. Her tears fell on her lover's face, but they were tears of joy; and with them were mingled tiny bursts of laughter and a thousand endearing words without sense, like the lisp of a little child. She quite forgot that the sight of her joy might sadden the heart of King Loc.

"My beloved," said George, "I find you again such as I had longed for: the fairest and dearest of beings. You love me! Thank heaven, you love me! But, Honey-Bee, do you not also love King Loc a little, who delivered me out of the glass dungeon in which the nixies held me captive far away from you?"

Honey-Bee turned to King Loc.

"Little King Loc, and did you do this?" she cried. "You loved me, and yet you rescued the one I love and who loves me——"

Words failed her and she fell on her knees, her head in her hands.

All the little men who witnessed this scene deluged their cross-bows with tears. Only King Loc

remained serene. And Honey-Bee, overcome by his magnanimity and his goodness, felt for him the love of a daughter for a father.

She took her lover's hand.

"George," she said, "I love you. God knows how much I love you. But how can I leave little King Loc?"

"Hallo, there?" King Loc cried in a terrible voice, "now you are my prisoners!"

But this terrible voice he only used for fun and just as a joke, for he really was not at all angry. Here Francœur approached and knelt before them.

"Sire," he cried, "may it please your Majesty to let me share the captivity of the masters I serve?"

Said Honey-Bee, recognising him:

"Is it you, my good Francœur? How glad I am to see you again. What a horrid cap you've got on! Tell me, have you composed any new songs?"

And King Loc took them all three to dinner.

XXII

In which all ends well

HE next morning Honey-Bee, George and Francœur again arrayed themselves in the splendid garments prepared for them by the dwarfs, and proceeded to the banquet hall where, as he had promised, King Loc in the robes of an Emperor soon joined them. He was followed by his officers fully armed, and covered with furs of barbarous magnificence, and in their helmets the wings of swans. Crowds of hurrying dwarfs came in through the windows, the air-holes and the chimneys, and rolled under the benches.

King Loc mounted a stone table one end of which was laden with flagons, candelabra, tankards, and cups of gold of marvellous workmanship. He signed to Honey-Bee and to George to approach.

"Honey-Bee," he said, "by a law of the nation of the dwarfs it is decreed that a stranger received in our midst shall be free after seven years. You have been with us seven years, Honey-Bee, and I should be a disloyal citizen and a blameworthy king should I keep you longer. But before permitting you to

go I wish, not having been able to wed you myself, to betroth you to the one you have chosen. I do so with joy for I love you more than I love myself, and my pain, if such remains, is like a little cloud which your happiness will dispel. Honey-Bee of Clarides, Princess of the Dwarfs, give me your hand, and you George of Blanchelande, give me yours."

Placing the hand of George in the hand of Honey-Bee he turned to his people and said with a ringing voice:

"Little men, my children, you bear witness that these two pledge themselves to marry one another on earth. They shall go back together and together help courage, modesty, and fidelity, to blossom as roses, pinks, and peonies bloom for good gardeners."

At these words the dwarfs burst into a mighty shout, but not knowing if they ought to grieve or to rejoice, they were torn by conflicting emotions.

King Loc, again turning to the lovers, said as he pointed to the flagons, the tankards, all the beautiful art of the goldsmith:

"Behold the gifts of the dwarfs. Take them, Honey-Bee, they will remind you of your little friends. It is their gift to you, not mine. What I am about to give you you shall know before long."

A lengthy silence ensued.

With an expression sublime in its tenderness, King Loc gazed at Honey-Bee, whose beautiful and radiant head, crowned by roses, rested on her lover's shoulder.

Then he continued:

"My children, it is not enough to love passionately; you must also love well. A passionate love is good doubtless, but a beautiful love is better. May you have as much strength as gentleness; may it lack nothing, not even forbearance, and let even a little compassion be mingled with it. You are young, fair and good; but you are human, and because of this capable of much suffering. If then something of compassion does not enter into the feelings you have one for the other, these feelings will not always befit all the circumstances of your life together; they will be like festive robes that will not shield you from the wind and rain. We love truly only those we love even in their weakness and their poverty. To forbear, to forgive, to console, that alone is the science of love."

King Loc paused, seized by a gentle but strong emotion.

"My children," he then continued; "may you be happy; guard your happiness well, guard it well."

While he addressed them Pic, Tad, Dig, Bob,

Truc, and Pau clung to Honey-Bee's white mantle and covered her hands and arms with kisses and they implored her not to leave them. Thereupon King Loc took from his girdle a ring set with a glittering gem. It was the magic ring which had unclosed the dungeon of the nixies. He placed it on Honey-Bee's finger.

"Honey-Bee," he said, "receive from my hand this ring which will permit you, you and your husband, to enter at any hour the kingdom of the dwarfs. You will be welcomed with joy and succoured at need. In return teach the children that will be yours not to despise the little men, so innocent and industrious, who dwell under the earth."

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